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# **CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE**

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AS A RESULT of the disintegration caused by two world wars society as a whole is confronted with a set of new problems. It is no longer possible to live according to old ways under modern conditions and, therefore, there is need of adaptation of our cultural heritage to present-day requirements. In this effort it is a belief of the author that the social sciences will be of some assistance. In this book of his the author lays emphasis on the fact that anthropology is not an abstruse science meant for the study of a few specialists, but that it is a guide which may enable mankind to understand the law of social development. For he says, 'Where changes are taking place in a haphazard manner, where human energy is wasted in blind experimental effort, perhaps an organized body of knowledge may help and at least prevent much of this wastage. It is on these grounds that a knowledge of civilization and its workings may claim to be included in any scheme of humanistic study.'

Professor N. K. Bose takes, as his field of research, races and communities in India and studies them with sympathy and understanding. The originality of the book has been further established by a great demand there has been for this work since the time of its first printing.

All the essays have been carefully revised and are being published for the first time with appendices which include discussions on Art and Religion, Human Geography, Field Investigation and Personal Attitudes in Cultural Change.



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# CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY



NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE



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## PREFACE

A word of apology is needed for the publication of the present collection of essays. In 1929, a small book was published by the author entitled *Cultural Anthropology*. A few years ago Prof. A. L. Kroeber and Prof. Clyde Kluckhohn made references to that book in their publication entitled *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952). As the small book was no longer available in the market, it was thought that a reprint without change might be useful. This was done in 1953. But in the meanwhile the essays had been revised but not published. The present publishers became interested in the revised MS., and it has been through their enthusiasm that the book is once more being placed before the public. A few instructions issued from time to time to students of Anthropology or Human Geography have also been added in the Appendices.

## INTRODUCTION

AFTER THE GENERAL disintegration caused by two world wars, many people feel that the time has come for the reconstruction of human society on a new basis. The social structure which we have inherited from the past was built in answer to the challenge of certain problems of life, many of which are now out of action. A new set of problems has arisen and it is no longer possible to live according to old ways under modern conditions. A determined effort should, therefore, be made in order to adapt our cultural heritage to present-day needs and requirements. It is the belief of some thinkers that, in this work of reconstruction, the social sciences may be of some help to mankind. Some of the social sciences have indeed been of assistance to rulers in governing their subjects in the past. It is, therefore, not unnatural to hope that these sciences may also be of assistance when the purpose is nobler and conquest of happiness the goal set before mankind, instead of their subordination to serve the interests of a particular class.

The question is, in what way can the social sciences be of aid in the task of human reorganization? It might be argued that these sciences help us in understanding more clearly the way in which human society works and human civilization changes. Just as a proper appreciation of the laws of physics enables an engineer to understand the workings of an engine, so anthropology should enable us to gain an understanding of the way in which society or civilization changes. Where changes are taking place in a haphazard manner, where human energy is wasted in blind experimental efforts, perhaps an organized body of knowledge may help, at least in the prevention of much of this wastage. It is on these grounds that a knowledge of civilization and its workings may



claim to be included in any scheme of humanistic studies.

The theoretical position taken in this book is that, in the last analysis, the drama of the evolution of civilization is ultimately human in import and direction. There is no justification for a belief in pre-determination in the matter of historical evolution, and also no justification for a permanent emphasis upon any particular factor in the matter of determining the course of that evolution. Anthropology helps us in the study of the part played by various factors involved, and in observing if they have been constant or been different under different situations. Indeed, it should be the object of the anthropologist to study in detail specific circumstances and specific causes and, if possible, arrive at broad generalizations with the application of the scientific or inductive method.

To the present writer, the drama appears, as has been indicated above, essentially human in import. Man seems to have the freedom to choose; and it is in this freedom that the responsibility of progress or otherwise, also lies. Man is ultimately the maker or unmaker of his own destiny. Theoretically, this is going back to the *Doctrine of Karma* as held by the Buddha; and personally the author subscribes to the opinion that the social sciences lead us that far and no farther.



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CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

## CHAPTER I

# ANTHROPOLOGY AND ITS AIMS

### *The Springs of Human Behaviour*

IN FORMER TIMES it was generally believed that man was a special creation of God, and that he had little in common with the animal world. The chief difference lay in the fact that animals were ruled by instincts while man was governed by reason, reason being something different from the instincts. This opinion was shared by scholars for a long time but finally men of science discovered that there was nothing so very uncommon in man's behaviour—as a matter of fact man was as much under the sway of instincts as his lowlier brethren. Only, in his case, the simple instinctive reactions were considerably modified by memory and the capacity of forming ideas and generalizations independent of specific situations.

It was also observed that these instincts were the same in the case of men and animals. Subsequently, as a reaction against the older theory of special creation, man began to be considered as nothing more than an animal, and scientific men devoted much of their time and labour in drawing parallels between mankind and the animal world, instead of judiciously finding out where their similarities and differences actually lay.

### *Theories of Evolution*

We may reasonably suppose that although ancient philosophers held reason and instinct to be two unrelated forces, they could not have failed to notice the similarity which existed between the animal and the human world. It is very interesting to observe that in ancient India a theory of evolution of a very original



character was propounded to explain the facts of human and animal life. Indian psychologists held that the motive force of our life sprang from the Will which was a function of the *Atman* or soul. The Will acted through the medium of one's inborn tendencies or desires or *samskaras*. These again were the product of man's own acts in past lives. It was said that, as the minor soul or *Lingasareera* had to pass from one birth to another, it carried the impression of actions and desires predominating in each life, the impression of a nearer birth being progressively more powerful than that of remoter ones.

The most interesting aspect of this theory, and the portion with which we are specially concerned, was that the *Lingasareera* was supposed to pass through 840 million births in course of its total history. Of these millions of births some were in animal form, some in vegetable form and some in human, or even divine, forms. There were three fundamental qualities in nature named *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*; *Tamas* predominated in plant and animal forms, but in man all the three occurred in different proportions. But if *Tamas* predominated in a particular individual, he was likely to be reborn in the form of some plant or animal whose character he most closely approximated in his last human incarnation. It went on and on like this until the individual soul progressed through many rises and falls to its destiny, which was freedom from rebirth when he reached a position of the enjoyment of eternal peace.

This elaborate theory of transmigration of souls gave a sort of explanation as to why men have many traits in common with animals. It must be admitted that this in itself was a great step forward. But Indian philosophers failed to build up the biological theory of evolution like their Western counterparts. They did not notice that bodily forms were also subject to change, but held that the latter were created once for

all and remained unaltered through time. Western scientists, with their improved means of travel and greater interest in outward forms, compared the forms of plants and of animals in different countries and thus laid the foundation of the modern theory of evolution, which leads us another step forward in the understanding of life and its complex manifestations.

But the West was at first reluctant to admit the truth of the theory of evolution. It was only when Darwin, Huxley and Haeckel succeeded in gathering a very large mass of facts in support of evolution that the theory was finally accepted as true. These great scientists also demonstrated that man's bodily form was a product of the same forces which governed the evolution of plants and animals. Their observations gave rise to the science of anthropology, which at first was chiefly interested in the physical characteristics of man and of their evolution in course of geological history. But gradually the scope of science was extended until it included the study of human civilization, and scientists began to feel that in this field too the law of evolution could be successfully demonstrated.

### *The Scope of Anthropology*

Anthropological study thus resolves itself into two parts, viz., that connected with the body of man and that connected with his activities, including their outward concrete expressions in the shape of laws and morals, economic and social systems, beliefs and religions, in short, with all that we understand by the civilization of any particular community.

If we travel from one country to another we soon notice that although all men in the world have many things in common, they show a wide range of differences in regard to their height and appearance, skin colour or other physical characteristics. Some men are brown,



some yellow, some have curly hair, while others have it straight and lank, some have fine thin lips, while those of others are thick or even everted. These differences appear very striking to us, and we are often tempted to over-emphasize them, to neglect the fact that men have more things in common than differences.

The first duty of an anthropologist is to set aside all prejudices born of first impressions and note with scientific precision the various points of similarity and difference which lie between different races of mankind. He observes, for example, the colour of the skin in different countries, the character of the hair, the shape and size of the skull, the character of the nose or the stature and proportions of the various limbs. He then classifies men of different countries with the aid of these characteristics, subdividing them into smaller and smaller groups until the physical features of all varieties of men have been taken into account, and characteristics which endure through generations with little change are separated from those which are readily subject to influences from outside. An anthropologist also digs up the bones of ancient men, compares them with modern skeletal remains, and with the aid of these supplementary evidences, tries to build up the story of how the human body has changed in course of time and also what have been the causes of these changes. This portion of the science is known as Physical Anthropology. Recently there has been an enlargement of the scope of this branch of anthropology. Physiological characteristics, like the character of the blood, or reactions to various kinds of chemicals placed on the tongue, as well as finer anatomical characters like markings on the fingers or palms are now studied with great care. These also help us in establishing genetic relationships between different communities, and thus help in supplementing the findings based on coarser anatomical characteristics.

But there is another branch of the science which deals principally with the activities of man instead of his physical characteristics. This particular branch of anthropology is known as Cultural Anthropology, and in it we consider the nature of culture and the processes through which it changes; how human behaviour becomes institutionalized, and how it differs from animal behaviour; whether new light is thrown on unknown specific characteristics of man; whether these have evolved as adaptation to environment and so on. Much of the data of Cultural Anthropology is furnished by human behaviour. But all of man's behaviour does not necessarily fall within the scope of this branch of anthropology; only a portion of it does. It is that portion which is institutionalized and is capable of being transmitted from one human group to another, which forms the subject-matter of the anthropologist's study. A concrete example will help to explain exactly what is meant.

### *Anthropology and Human Behaviour*

Let us observe some simple cases of human behaviour. Suppose there has been a death in a family. The event naturally proves to be of great emotional significance to the surviving members. One of them may go into a hysterical fit, while another perhaps sobs in silence. A third perhaps tries to drown his feelings in a host of vigorous physical activities. All these three persons are profoundly moved by a particular event, but the way in which they actually react are characteristically personal and offer little scope for generalization. But if we find that the members of a certain family taboo coloured garments and animal food for a specified number of days after a death has occurred in the family, or if they assemble to offer prayers to God in a particular manner, and if such behaviour is taught to children and enforced by tradition and custom, then

We are not dealing with a merely personal reaction to a situation, but with a conventional form in which a person is trained and habituated to express his feelings under specific situations. It has both a personal value as well as an institutional significance, and it is behaviour of this kind which forms the subject-matter of Cultural Anthropology.

We should, however, remember that these customary forms of behaviour need not necessarily be undertaken by many men at the same time. A man might be lost in a forest without any food whatsoever. Perhaps he has a horse with him and the only way to save his own life is to kill the horse and eat its flesh. But all communities in the world do not eat horse's meat and our lonely traveller may belong to a tribe to which horse's meat is taboo. And consequently he prefers to do without it even at the risk of losing his life. There is no one else to check or guide his behaviour now, but he acts as his own mentor and does nothing which he would not have done in the company of his fellow-men. It is as if the social group were present here by proxy. The behaviour of the solitary man is so deeply conditioned by his social environment that he follows the approved pattern of conduct even when this may bring about a crisis in his personal life.

Such customs are not without value. Through them the accumulated experience of generations is transmitted to new generations. It makes life's task easier for those who come later in point of time. If every generation of men had to build up their own methods of dealing with every new situation in life, each man for himself, and if there had been no means of transmitting experiences, life would have been too burdensome and wasteful an experiment, and much of the leisure which men now enjoy would have disappeared.

In any case, we may now perhaps describe culture as comprising such behaviour as is common to groups



of men, and which is capable of transmission to other groups residing elsewhere or to generations of men yet unborn. Specific means are also developed in order to transfer these standardized patterns of behaviour from place to place or across the barriers of time, the ultimate purpose being to hand over the accumulated experiences of one group of men to another.

All types of human behaviour do not therefore come under the scope of anthropology, only a small, very special and institutionalized fraction of it does so.

### *Anthropology, History and Psychology*

Thus if anthropology means the study of human civilization, how does it differ from history? For history also deals with the rise and growth of human civilization. Let us then try to examine how history and anthropology stand in relation to one another.

It is generally held that the principal object of the historian is to narrate accurately the course of historical events. He shows the continuity of civilization, and describes its various phases, noting, at the same time, how they are affected by great personalities or past historical conditions. He also tries partly to take into account such factors as geographical environment, racial characteristics, migration of peoples, etc., in their effect upon human civilization. As far as this is concerned, the historian and the anthropologist march hand-in-hand. But their chief difference lies in the nature of the problems to which they attend separately. The historian, even when he uses various categories of explanation, always tries to explain civilization as such, he has no interest in the biological nature of man as it is revealed upon the historical stage. And it is perhaps here that the anthropologist steps in with his special interests. He goes through the same round of human culture, perhaps probes a little deeper into its neglected corners, but his object is always to

learn something more, if possible, about the biological nature of man.

We have already said that the anthropologist is very much interested in the physical evolution of man. In studying the evolution of culture, he asks himself again and again how much of it has been due to the physical progress of mankind. In other words, he tries to establish some kind of correlation between man's physical and his cultural evolution, if that is at all possible. In fact, this actually forms the central and final problem of anthropology. History and anthropology thus have much in common as far as their scope is concerned, but they differ in respect of their points of view and in the nature of their principal interests.

Psychology also invites comparison with anthropology, for their points of view are essentially the same. Both look upon man as a biological organism, but whereas the psychologist investigates the nature of the mind, an anthropologist is more interested in the relation between the mind of man and the institutionalized forms of behaviour, i.e. culture, which has been built up in course of human evolution, and which also largely regulates the actual expression of human life.

In dealing with its special problems, psychology has to depend specially upon an accurate observation of personal mental life, while the anthropologist, as indicated above, has to depend more upon institutionalized forms of behaviour.

#### SUMMARY

The approach of anthropology is essentially biological. Man can be studied in his anatomical or his behavioural aspect. The body of man today can be compared with those of his ancestors, both human and non-human, and one may study the manner in which it has changed, as

well as the causes which have brought this about. In cultural anthropology, one compares the institutional behaviour of different communities separated by time and space. One also tries to find out if cultural evolution is guided by any general laws or not.

Anthropologists cover much of the ground on which historians and psychologists also operate. Perhaps the special task or field of anthropology is to find out the relationship, if any, between physical and cultural evolution.



## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS CULTURE?

#### *The Roots of Culture*

IF WE COMPARE the social culture of different countries, we find that all of them have a fairly large number of features in common. Everywhere men use some sort of spoken language. They have customary methods of gathering food and drink, and also certain conventional ways of securing the co-operation of different individuals in the quest for food and in the satisfaction of sexual desires. In a book entitled *Man and Culture*, Wissler, has classified the common features of human civilization under the following heads: Speech, Material Traits, Arts, Mythology, Knowledge, Religion, Family and Social Systems, Property, Government, War. These are common to all known forms of human civilization, so the question naturally arises, is there anything which lies at the root of this uniformity of pattern?

Civilization might have started, at first, only in one place on the earth, and then it may have been carried all over the world. This may be a possible reason why outwardly civilizations are so much alike in their broad essentials. But till now, no anthropologist has been able to prove satisfactorily that this was actually the case. As a matter of fact, it appears more probable that civilization sprang independently at several centres rather than in one single place at a certain period in the history of the human race. And, if that is so, then we have to account for the uniformity of civilizations in some other way.

Wissler has suggested the hypothesis that there might be a culture-building instinct in man, which compels him to build civilization after a definite pattern, wherever he might be born. That instinct is like the

instinct of the bee which compels it to build its hive after a definite general pattern all over the world. In other words, the character is transmissible by heredity and not subject to environmental influences (Wissler 1923: 264, 269).<sup>1</sup>

### *Culture as Adaptive Behaviour*

Instead of examining the merits of Wissler's hypothesis, we shall make his classification the starting point of our own discussion. We shall consider how culture stands in relation to the life of humanity, whether its various aspects can be accounted for in terms of the basic instincts of hunger, sex and so on.

In Wissler's classification, there is an item entitled Material Traits. It includes the means of securing food by hunting or agriculture, the means of finding shelter from rain and wind and of covering our body with some kind of garment. It is needless to say that the conventional practices and mechanical contrivances associated with our quest of food and shelter have evolved out of our instinct of self-preservation. The same is true, to a certain extent, of war. For war also springs from the desire for power and that in turn is due to the more basic instinct of self-preservation. But there are some other features within Material Traits which cannot be readily explained in terms of self-preservation.

Thus, if all the houses in a country are built with their faces to the south, we may ascribe it to geographical necessity; if they have steep roofs, it may be due to an abundance of snowfall; if they are built on piles, it may be due to the marshy character of the land. All these are results of adaptation to environment. But how can we explain why men persist in thatching their houses with straw even when it is more economical to use earthen tiles; why they refuse to eat unfamiliar food even when this might be the only way of survival in a

<sup>1</sup> Wissler, Clark, *Man and Culture*, London, 1923.

crisis ; why a tribe accustomed to wear a particular kind of dress suited to a cold climate refuses to change it in a warm climate ; why a conquered tribe gradually adopts the customs and sometimes the social system of the conquerors even when it may be positively harmful to do so? The material traits of any civilization are thus not merely simple and direct adaptations to the physical environment, there is something else which modifies the nature of direct adaptation.

It appears on a closer examination that man is in the habit of modifying his personal activities in conformity with those of his fellowmen, specially those with whom he is intimately associated in the quest for food or in the matter of sexual satisfaction. Moreover, man worships power, and he imitates what a powerful man does, probably in the belief that he also would become equally powerful thereby. This element in human beings is actually responsible for many of the modifications to which human behaviour is subjected in actual life.

But the physical presence of other men is not always necessary in order to bring about the observed change. Man has the power of speech, and thus a means of communicating experiences by word of mouth. He is a tool-using animal. In his search for basic physical satisfaction, he also builds up many things which remain even after he is laid down in the grave. The feeling which a person has for his father and his ancestors is often transferred from their physical presence to the things which they leave behind. And thus, a man may allow his normal, instinctive reaction to a particular situation to be modified profoundly by his inherited culture—when he earns the satisfaction of having conformed to the usages of his ancestors in relation to various problems of personal life.

This readiness to behave like his fellow-beings, and the two instincts which have given rise to speech and the use of tools, thus subject his simple responses to



modification and give rise to human civilization, which continues from one generation to another and carries the accumulated experiences of the past, and helps a new individual to meet a particular situation in life.

### *Limitations of the above Description of Culture*

But the above description of culture as a modified form of adaptive behaviour does not appear satisfactory in relation to some aspects of human culture. It fails when we have to deal with some forms of Religion, Art and Pure Knowledge. Much of primitive religion may owe its existence to fear, but everything is not covered by that explanation. It is also difficult to explain art as a modified form of adaptation to environment. There is something more in man which raises him above the demands of his vital being. It is the desire to know the truth about the whole universe. The knowledge may give power and self-assurance but it has to be examined more carefully before we can explain it in terms of 'economic' necessity.

The desire for knowledge, or the demand for truth, is not explicit in all human beings. Some show it more than others. But everyone seems to possess the desire to a greater or lesser extent. Psychoanalysts are of the opinion that the desire to know and be one with the universe is a sublimated form of sexual desire. It may be true in some cases, but perhaps it is not true for all. Whatever the origin of this desire may be, it is an observed fact that the impulse for identification with the universe is occasionally so strong that it lifts certain persons above their subjugation to vital needs. The demands of the impulse often go against the demands of personal well-being, so that—so far as the individual is concerned—it has hardly any utility on the personal level. The importance of this aspect of man's personal life lies in the fact that it has been responsible for some of the finest expressions of human civilization. Some of the

best creations of thought and of art have been contributed by men whose own lives have been blighted by the claims and responsibilities of this higher and intenser form of personal life.

It may be a fact that the creation of philosophers, artists or scientists have indirectly helped other men to lead a better life or fortify them against the ravages of reality. Some may argue that these higher cultural objects are thus of use to the Race, although the individual's life might have been sacrificed in the process. And, as such, even the higher forms of art and thought are as much adaptations to the demands of life as anything else. We are not, however, sure if all the products of art and thought can thus be ultimately economic in origin in the above sense; the benefits are not patent in every case. It must however be admitted that this explanation has a certain measure of plausibility about it.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it would not be totally denouncing science if we say that the higher forms of culture which are ultimately built upon a negation of the individual and an identification with the universal, may be placed in the same category as the death which an animal voluntarily courts in order to preserve its young. Both are born of the impulse to die for the sake of love. And it is possible that the superior aspects of human civilization are the result of a similar impulse in the human animal to drown its personal life completely in response to the demands of universal life. And it is this love, which does not hesitate to sacrifice personal well-being for some cause which is higher, that has raised human culture above the level of sheer biological existence.

### *A Summary Review of Culture*

On analysis, culture is thus found to consist of certain aspects which are expressly meant to satisfy man's vital needs. These aspects are comparable to the adap-

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I.

tive life-habits of animals, only, in the case of man, his simple instinctive reactions are given a special turn in accordance with certain peculiarly human traits, his speech, his tool-using capacity, his highly developed instinct to act like his fellowmen or learn from them and so on. These together give human behaviour an institutional form and thereby a permanency which helps to retain the accumulated experience of past generations of men for the benefit of future ones.

There is, besides this, another impulse in man connected with his vision of the universe as a whole, an impulse which demands that he should set his life in tune with a law which he feels runs through all phenomena. In the last analysis, this desire itself may be due to a sublimation of the sexual instinct. Whatever its origin, it is due to the urges of this impulse that the best forms of religion, art and science come into being. Outwardly speaking, these aspects of culture do not always have any utility for the life of the individual as such. They may help other men to live better lives by filling their heart with gladness and joy, but such benefits derived from the higher aspects of human civilization are evidently no more than by-products. If psychoanalysts are right in their view, then it has to be admitted that even these are ultimately economic in origin, although apparently they may seem to come into conflict with personal well-being.

We are thus not in a position to state with any assurance of certainty whether all aspects of human culture are ultimately economic in origin or not. Most of it undoubtedly is, but there are some aspects which refuse to come easily under the cover of such an explanation.

### *The Unity of Culture*

We have already described how Wissler has roughly analysed culture under several heads like Speech, Tools,



Art or Ritualism. This does not, however, mean that culture can really be cut up into independent fragments which have no relation with one another. In fact, Wissler's analysis is only a convenient means of drawing attention to the salient phases of culture. At bottom, all these separate facets of culture are closely inter-related, the roots of one often running underneath others which may apparently belong to a separate category. The concept of Property, for instance, is inextricably bound up with Social Systems, and so also with Material Traits. One cannot be understood without reference to the other. In fact, the various departments of culture are often so closely interlaced that it becomes difficult to post a particular trait under one heading or another. The following example will help us to realize how intimate this inter-relation can sometimes be.

Vaishnavism forms one of the principal religious traits of the culture of Bengal. A person belonging to the Vaishnava sect looks upon God in a personal capacity, with whom it is possible to enter into relations of service, friendship or love. According to a Vaishnava devotee, God is limitless in attribute, but when we ascribe certain qualities like mercy or compassion to Him, we do not thereby set limitations upon His attributes, but rather seek to touch His limitless Being with those antennae of feeling with which we have been endowed by His grace. We cannot comprehend God in His entirety, but when we try to feel His presence through these little human tricks, our purpose is to draw sustenance for our own selves in the trials and sufferings of human life. It is, however, said in the Vaishnava scriptures that one who has dipped himself in the Formless Absolute never comes back to the shore in order to gaze upon and enjoy the vision of God. His personal life is scorched by the fire of God's love and the life of the world ceases once for all for him.

But for the ordinary man the goal is never set so high. The purpose of the average devotee is to gain

strength, courage and peace through the profession of Vaishnavism. It is mainly with this idea that the Vaishnava lay disciple in Bengal tries to foster the feeling of friendship or service towards God as He was manifested in Krishna, the son of Yasoda, in whom he believes the Divine Essence incarnated itself more completely than in any other incarnation.

We have purposely given a detailed account of the inner beliefs and attitudes of the Vaishnava, for these form the core round which many of the religious practices and social institutions have clustered together to form what is covered by the single term Vaishnavism. In his religious exercises the devotee aims at reaching a state of complete mental surrender to God. He tries to bring this about by the cultivation of a spirit of selflessness through the practice of humility and prayer. He does not, however, regulate the course of spiritual exercises himself but depends upon a preceptor for that purpose. A Vaishnava treats his preceptor with the greatest veneration. In fact, the preceptor is often looked upon as an incarnation of God who has to be obeyed without question, and on whom complete reliance is placed in matters affecting spiritual life.

The daily life of a Vaishnava devotee is marked by prescribed forms of worship. He counts his beads in accompaniment with a particular name of God prescribed for him by his preceptor. The Vaishnava's rosary is made of sacred basil wood, while that of other sects may be made of rock-crystal or the seed of a fruit called *rudraksha*. The Vaishnava also wears bead-collars of the same wood and paints sect-marks on his forehead and body with sandalwood paste or some white earth in accordance with the regulations of his own sect. Now and then, he is expected to invite other Vaishnavas to a feast where only vegetarian meals are served. He is also expected to go on pilgrimage to different holy places all over India connected with Vaishnavism.

Thus, in Bengal, Vaishnavism not only consists of

particular beliefs and mental attitudes towards the world and other human beings, but is also marked by common observances in food, dress and personal habits. Vaishnavism has a definite ecclesiastical organization. Its practice also includes pilgrimages and the worship of saints. If we compare the Vaishnava with other religious sects in India, many common beliefs and practices soon become evident. But the particular constellation of cultural elements described above forms a unique combination and it is this which goes by the name of Vaishnavism in Bengal.

Many elements from Wissler's classification, like Material Traits, Knowledge or Social Systems are thus involved in the formation of the trait which passes under the name of Vaishnavism. This is also the reason why a trait is often referred to as a trait-complex, for it is almost always compounded of elements drawn from under several distinct and separate categories of classification.

Instead of imagining that culture is like a building of bricks and mortar, parts of which might be taken down separately, it is better to regard culture as a sort of mixed up stuff like a heap of sand and gravel, and which can be run through sieves of different meshes according to the claims of our intellectual interests. In nature, however, they are very intimately mingled with one another. For we must remember that culture is, after all, an institutionalized phase of human life; and just as human life itself cannot be divided into water-tight compartments, so also its institutional expression refuses to be treated in a different manner. Obviously, there is a basic unity between the two.

The intimate relation in which the components of culture stand to one another can be further demonstrated in yet another way. Whenever there is change in any one segment of culture, the other segments are also affected at the same time. The introduction of steam in human industries has not only brought

about a revolution in the economic life of the world, but has affected social relations and, through them, also been responsible for several wars and numerous political readjustments. Steam has thus not only added another item to Material Traits, but has revolutionized the Social System in areas where it has spread.

It is easy to multiply examples like this from the history of the world. The invention of fire and the wheel, the domestication of animals, the use of paper and of gunpowder, have all been attended by widespread changes in human civilization. And this inter-relation has been of such an organic nature that it leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the various components of culture are intimately and organically inter-related to one another in such a manner that any treatment of one without reference to another is bound to be artificial. Intellectually, such a treatment is likely to lead to barren abstractions, and the real nature of human civilization is likely to be lost sight of.

### *A Suggested Classification of Culture*

Although culture is thus a unity, yet for the sake of scientific convenience we have to analyse it into component parts. A system of classification of cultural traits has therefore to be devised, which should be in keeping with the unified nature of culture in its relation to human life.

We may start with a classification of human desires. These can be roughly divided into three groups, viz., those connected with *Artha* or economic needs, *Kama* or sexual desires and *Moksha* or the desire for spiritual freedom. What we customarily do, or are trained to do, in order to satisfy the above impulses can be called *Acharya* or institutionalized behaviour, which forms the core of social culture. Social culture itself may be called *acharya* if we remember that it acts in four phases, namely *Vastu* or



Material object, *Kriya* or habitual action, *Samhati* or social organization and *Tattwa* or abstract ideas, which may mainly consist of personal beliefs and opinions (*viswasa-mulaka*) or of a consistent body of knowledge obtained through the application of logical methods (*vichara-mulaka*).

In the cultural trait which we have described at length in the previous section, we found that the trait operated through all the phases of *vastu*, *kriya*, *samhati* and *tattwa*. The central object in Vaishnavism is however the deliverance of the individual from the bondage of life, so that the trait can easily be placed under *moksha* of the present scheme. It is therefore a trait belonging to the third category of our scheme and operating through all the four possible phases of expression. But among the four, *tattwa* probably predominates over the rest.

Let us take a second example. The family life of man is intended to satisfy partly his sexual and partly his economic needs. It centres round a home, common objects of property, and certain conventional beliefs regarding the relationship between members of the family. We can, therefore, look upon the family as something which satisfies the desires of *artha* and *kama*, while it operates through the three phases of *vastu*, *samhati* and *tattwa*.

This scheme of two-dimensional classification of cultural traits is perhaps a little clumsy. But it has been offered in the hope that it may help us in regarding culture in closer relationship to human life. It emphasizes the connection of culture with basic human needs and desires, and also indirectly helps to emphasize the basic unity which underlies all cultural phenomena.

#### SUMMARY

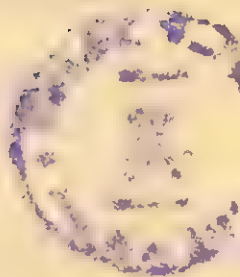
A pattern of behaviour which helps a community to survive may be taught to children, or may be accepted

by neighbouring communities. Such adaptive behaviour forms the core of culture as it is understood in anthropology. All segments of culture cannot however be neatly explained in 'economic' terms.

Various parts or aspects of a community's culture are closely inter-related. Change in one is likely to bring about change in another.

Culture has thus a unity of its own.

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### CHAPTER III

## THE SOUL OF CULTURE

EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION is today dominated by capitalism, and capitalism thrives upon unrestrained acquisition through competition. It is based upon the freedom of the individual from various social restraints in regard to economic activity. The spirit which has led to the growth of capitalism has stamped itself deeply upon the whole of Europe's culture, and distinguishes it from other cultures of the world. In art, architecture, games, it is individual excellence which is valued above all else. But in ancient India where caste was predominant, individualism was not encouraged in the ordinary affairs of life. It was conformity to the established code which was considered better than any marked expression of individuality. This was as true in art as in expressions of daily life. When building temples, architects did not like to leave their names behind. They looked upon a temple not as the product of one great artist, but as the product of the combined effort of many artists. It was more the product of an age or of a civilization, and, therefore, individual records of names did not really have any place in it. Artists followed their profession in the spirit of *dharma* or religious duty, which required the individual's complete surrender of personality.

In philosophical matters also, Europe is prone to emphasize Darwin's struggle for existence as the most potent factor in evolution. Marx likewise explained progress as caused by various economic classes competing with one another for the possession of power. But in India emphasis was laid on quite a different thing. It recognized the right of all to live, and held that it was through love and co-operation that men lived, and that in these lay the guarantee of human progress.

It is not necessary to pursue this line of thought any further. We shall just point out that there is everywhere an inner set of beliefs and attitudes which underlies a civilization at a given point of time. It is this underlying constellation of ideas and associated emotions which gives a particular character to culture. This set of beliefs does not remain constant for a very long time, even for the same people. Thus, Europe has not always been what it is today. Before capitalism came into being, Europe was as much marked by the suppression of individuality in the Middle Ages as India is today. And in India too there are plenty of signs to show that the ancient spirit of co-operation or conformity to tradition is giving place to a growth of individualism, which often seeks to fulfil itself by trying to break free from the traditional shackles. This has followed in the wake of a progressive downfall of the old economic system and its substitution by capitalism. We need not consider here why and how the set of dominant thoughts changes in a civilization. Our main purpose here is to draw attention to their existence beneath a multitude of cultural forms, and to show that they do not remain constant through a fairly considerable length of time, and that they are not limited to any specific department of culture, but can be traced by their influence through many phases of culture.

In fact, this underlying system of values and beliefs binds together various aspects of culture by bonds of kinship.

We shall try to explain with the help of the history of caste how the inner spirit of a people change, and how also the outer framework of culture is altered in conformity with it.

### *Caste: Period of Subjugation and Assimilation*

The first period in Indian history is marked by the expansion of the Vedic Aryans and by a hostile attitude



exercised by them towards those with whom they came into contact in the course of their eastward or southward migration. In the Rig Veda there is proof that the Aryans were surrounded on all sides by hostile tribes who were variously designated as Dasas or Dasyus. They were addicted to strange vows, not sacrificing, and the Aryans prayed to their own gods to hurl weapons of destruction upon these Dasyus. But in the age of the *Mahabharata* the term Dasyu lost its specific significance and was applied in general to such tribes as the Kirata, Yavana, Gandhara, China, Savara, Barbara, Pulinda, Ramatha and Kamboja. The *Mahabharata* also says that these tribes were living under the social system of the Aryans, called the system of Four Varnas 'in disguise'. It then went on to say that the Dasyu tribes should be taught to conform to the Aryan standards of life more closely (*Shantiparvan*, ch. 65).

Thus, between the end of the Rigvedic period and that of the *Mahabharata* many non-Aryan tribes had gradually become absorbed in Brahmanical society. But communal hatred was still there, and the feeling formerly exercised towards enemies was now transferred to lower, i.e. subjugated, classes within the same society. Its intensity must also have worn down in course of time, due to altered relations.

The lower class in Brahmanical society was formed by the Sudra. Conquered and subsequently assimilated tribes were usually assigned the status of the Sudra in society. The term Sudra was employed as a term of reproach as in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. The *Taittiriya Aranyaka* also says that Sudras were born of Asuras while Brahmans were born of gods. In the Atharva Veda there is a prayer to the God of Fever in which he is entreated to leave the abode of the Aryans and depart for the homes of certain foreign tribes or invade the person of Sudra maidens, who were evidently not held in very high esteem. But the Vedas also contain the story of the son of a female slave who could compose

beautiful hymns, but who was nevertheless debarred from participating in Vedic ceremonies until the gods themselves took up his case and overruled the objections of the Brahman priesthood. In one passage in the Atharva Veda it is said that Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras or slaves should all be taught the message of the Vedas ; but it is not known if this was ever carried out in practice or whether it remained merely the pious wish of one solitary poet. But at the end of the same age, in the period of the *Sutras*, we read of the cruel rule that molten lac or lead should be poured into the ears of a Sudra who had deliberately heard a Vedic recital, while the body of one who dared to store Vedic verses in memory should be cut in twain.

A mixed feeling of avoidance as well as of tolerance was thus exercised towards the Sudra. It had important social and economic consequences, and we shall presently see how the structure of society and the economic organization which grew up in ancient India, as well as a particular philosophical attitude which was current here, were all the outcome of this basic ambivalent attitude towards a conquered and subjugated people.

### *The Economic Arrangement*

In the Vedic Age particular portions of the Vedas were in the keeping of particular families of Brahmans. That tradition has continued till the present time. But in the age under consideration, members of the same family evidently used to follow a variety of occupations. Thus, the son of a poet or professional bard could be a carpenter or a trader. Later on, choice of occupation was more or less restricted. The advantages of a strict division of labour were recognized and a law was made that men should follow their hereditary occupation as a normal practice. This was more or less in keeping with the practice current in Vedic times of assigning portions

of Vedic literature to the keeping of particular Brahman families. Such priestly monopoly, and its efficiency, may have actually furnished an argument in favour of the hereditary monopoly of occupations underlying caste.

In the time of the *Manusamhita* a tradition had already been built up that particular castes were to follow particular occupations. Not that any change was totally prohibited; but in every case a departure was clearly recognized as an exceptional practice or *apad-dharma*, only to be followed when it was not possible to follow the traditional one. It is noteworthy that more strictness was enjoined with regard to the trading and producing Vaishyas and Sudras than with regard to the warrior or priestly Kshatriyas and Brahmans. For it was held that if the Vaishyas and Sudras 'swerved from their duties, they would throw this world into confusion.' The *Sukraniti* says 'Every caste should practise the duties that have been mentioned as belonging to it, and that have been practised, and should otherwise be punished by kings.'

The enforcement of a fixed occupation upon each *jati* or caste was not probably very strict in practice, there were frequent departures from the rule. It was not law but custom, yet the custom had an almost legal authority behind it. The careful way in which the tradition of close correspondence between *jati* and occupation was built up is proof that the leaders of Brahmanical society wanted it to be so. Their intention was to build up a certain economic system which we shall now proceed to examine.

There is a tribe known as the Juangs in the hills of central Orissa. These Juangs formerly lived by hunting, collecting wild berries and cultivating the hill-side sporadically with an iron hoe of local manufacture. As the Hindus gradually colonized these fastnesses, the Juangs were forced to retire into narrower valleys and denser jungles. But the Juangs were numerous and the

hills were not sufficiently extensive. The means of producing food known to them was not sufficient to satisfy the whole tribe, so the Juangs suffered from the ravages of famine. Then they slowly submitted to their Hindu neighbours and sought new occupations by which they could maintain themselves in co-operation with their economic superiors. The Juangs near the town of Pal Lahara in Orissa have taken up basket making as their principal occupation. They sell baskets to neighbouring villagers and with that money supplement the small amount of food their women gather from the surrounding jungles. Those living in the district of Dhenkanal, south-west of Pal Lahara, have become farmers or farm-labourers serving landowners who belong to other communities. The Juangs, who formerly met all their economic needs themselves, have thus been reduced into producers of a particular commodity. They now form a part of the productive organization in which the Hindus occupy a dominant position. If it had not been modern times but ancient India, the Juangs would probably have been assured of a monopoly in their business by custom and also by the State which was there to enforce customary laws. Thus, the adjustments which they have arrived at in each locality would have been made permanent, and they would have been converted into a caste occupying a low place in Hindu society.

The economic organization of ancient India was built up substantially in this manner. There was more of an enforcement and fixation of haphazard adjustments than a deliberate planning from central headquarters. The whole country did not function as one economic unit, but was cut up into numerous units which were, more or less, self-sufficient regions. Production of wealth was organized on the basis of hereditary guilds. There was peace in the land for a long time, and the system proved so effective that India became one of the richest countries in the contemporary world.



o In this system the burden of labour was gradually shifted on to the shoulders of the Sudra, while the three higher *Varnas* or Orders remained in a more secure possession of special rights, special privileges and comparatively more leisure.

### *The Social Aspect*

The spirit of conquest thus brought about a clear displacement of the burden of labour from one class to another within the same society. This was attended by certain rearrangements within the social system. In order to mark off one class from another, inter-marriage and inter-dining were forbidden completely between different *varnas*. In the Vedic Age—and even in early Buddhist times—inter-marriage between *varnas* was not unknown, but this disappeared with the passage of time.

Many authors have tried to account for the growth of these rules of inter-dining and inter-marriage in Brahmanical society. Eggeling wrote in his *Races of Man*, 'Rules of endogamy and exogamy, privileges restricted to certain classes, of eating together, are not only Indian or Aryan, but world-wide phenomena. Both the spirit, and, to a large degree, the actual details of modern Indian, caste usages are identical with those ancient and, no doubt, universal customs.' Dr. Bhupendranath Datta<sup>1</sup> has tried to show how these universal customs were evolved to maintain class differences within the population. Dr. Hutton was of the opinion that a belief in the potency of touch with regard to food and drink was originally not a part of Aryan culture but was absorbed by it from some pre-Aryan culture of India. Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy was of opinion that the idea of the potency of touch need not necessarily have been pre-Aryan in origin. Its roots are contained even in the ancient sacred books of the Aryans themselves. According to him, caste is essentially a spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Studies in Indian Social Policy*, 1944.

organization. It places a premium upon certain qualities known as *sattwa-guna*, and its object was to help men to evolve from lower states to one in which these qualities prevailed. And as there is a close connection between food, sex and the *gunas* within man, rules restricting inter-marriage and inter-dining became an important feature of caste organization.

In any case, whatever may have been the origin of the regulations about food and drink, it is clear that the rules were employed to mark off one class in Hindu society from another. There is difference of opinion regarding the purpose of class-divisions; Roy holding that it was designed to spur the lower classes into a development of higher qualities, others, that it was merely an instrument of marking off the privileged from the unprivileged in society. Whatever the origin and the purpose of these regulations may have been, it is universally acknowledged that the rules were employed to indicate clearly the relative position of different castes in the matter of social estimation.

Manu held that 'a son partakes of the nature of his father and mother or of both of them; a man of vile descent can never conceal his birth' (X: 59, cf. X: 9, IX: 33-5). This theory of heredity supplied the theoretical justification for preventing inter-marriages, and we can safely imagine how great a value was attached to this theory during the conquests of the Brahmanical people when they were perhaps in danger of being swamped by the more numerous indigenous population.

#### *Attitude towards the Culture of Subjugated Tribes*

Some Mundas of Chotanagpur have recently been incorporated in Hindu society after the performance of a number of religious ceremonies. These Mundas have given up eating beef and drinking intoxicating liquors. They put on the sacred thread for a few days in the year when celebrating the *Manda Parab* in honour of the

Hindu god Siva. A Hindu priest, who is not a Brahman but a Vaishnava, officiates for them on the occasion and he is even allowed to ride upon his clients' back as part of the ceremony. The social custom of these reformed Mundas has practically remained unaffected and no Brahman priest is engaged during celebration of their marriage or funeral rites. The ceremonies themselves have, however, been shorn of a few features in accordance with their newly acquired moral ideas from Hinduism.

Thus, the partially reformed Mundas have been allowed to preserve their own culture even after Hindu priests have begun to associate with them in certain ceremonies. Such practices are not exceptional in Hinduism. As a matter of fact, this was almost the rule with the Brahmanical people when they were brought in contact with tribes of other cultures. In Savarāswamin's commentary on the *Purvaamimansa* we learn that the festival now called *Holi* was originally specially connected with the Prachyas or the people of eastern India. When the latter came under Brahmanical domination the question arose as to whether the *holi* should be allowed to continue or not. It was argued that as all established customs in the world had their root in the Vedas, the *holi* should not be discarded. It should continue because it had continued for a long time. Although its roots could not actually be traced to the Vedas, perhaps the particular passage supporting *holi* may have been lost. Many portions of the Vedas are indeed known to have been actually lost.

An attitude of *laissez-faire* was thus exercised by the Brahmanical people with reference to the culture of conquered tribes. The Brahmanical people subjugated tribes with whom they came into contact and made them serve their own economic needs, but refrained from forcing them to give up tribal beliefs and customs in favour of those of the conquerors. But a bias was sure to be created in favour of the latter among the conquered peoples.

Thus, Hinduism grew up as a confederation of tribal cultures under the overlordship of Brahmanism.

*Caste : the Second Period*

The economic organization set up under the *varna* system worked satisfactorily for a long time. The BARBER,<sup>2</sup> the CARPENTER and the BLACKSMITH who lived in the village continued to serve the villagers for an assured measure of corn each year, or in return of the grant of some freehold land. On their part too, the villagers saw to it that the craftsmen or artisans, or their descendants who served them, never suffered from want or neglect. The average craftsman cherished this security much more than any ambitious prospect of improvement ; and so the economic life of the Indian villages continued to run a smooth, even course through a long stretch of centuries. A man who performed duties assigned to him by birth in a spirit of complete selflessness and who devoted the rest of his time to spiritual development, was treated with more respect than one with a highly developed individuality. Thus people were trained to rest content with their present standard of living even when that standard was not very high.

The policy of *laissez-faire* exercised towards incorporated cultures helped indirectly to stabilize the economic structure underlying Hindu society. Although the conquered tribes felt that they were not given a position of equality with Brahmans, the security and protection which they enjoyed through monopoly and assured patronage, coupled with the freedom with regard to tribal cultures, took the edge off their discontent and added substantially to the preservation of India's economic condition in an undisturbed state.

<sup>2</sup> Where names of occupations are capitalized, it refers to a caste which bears that name and which is recognized to perform traditionally that particular work.



It was probably during this period of prosperity that the division of labour was further extended, the rules of endogamy which were formerly confined to *varnas*, were now extended to every occupational caste thrown up by economic development.

But there was another reason for the extension and hardening of the marriage and commensal restrictions in later times. This was accentuated by a puritanic reformatory movement set up in the country in the wake of Muslim conquest. Turks and Afghans, professing Islam, came to India as plunderers; but when they settled down as rulers, their religion and social system exercised a strong influence upon the caste system of the Hindus. Islam is democratic in character, and it does not tolerate the inequality in social status associated with the *varna* organization. As Islam was politically powerful, it began to affect caste adversely.

There were several types of reaction to the new situation. The 'lower' or poorer castes were converted in certain localities to Islam, while new religious sects also sprang up by weaving in some ideas from Islam into Hinduism. But the third type of reaction was of a more serious nature. In a spirit of self-defence Hindus also started a reformatory movement which ended by making caste even more inflexible than before. Inter-marriage and inter-dining were restricted still further, while the former position enjoyed by Sudras and women was now revised to the serious disadvantage of the latter.

The inferiority complex of the Hindus which attended Muslim subjugation and which came on the close of the period of assimilation and cultural domination associated with the earlier phase of Indian history, had thus important results upon her social and cultural growth. As we have just said, there were several forms of reaction in the new age. But of these the reactionary one prevailed in the end, and the synthetic sects associated with the names of Kabir, Nanak or Chaitanya were more and more isolated until they were transformed into a number

of additional castes of a sectarian nature under Hinduism. They failed to break the shackles of Hinduism. Side by side with the dominance of reactionary Hinduism, Islam also developed a more or less sectarian character in India. Its early tolerance was gone, and it became a narrow church different from what it was in other lands or in the early days of its history.

*Caste : The Third Phase under Capitalism*

The second period which continued up to the end of Muslim rule in India thus left caste much more hardened, narrow and logically more neatly elaborated than what it had been in the formative period of its history. In those days it was a growing organization, expanding with the progress of Brahmanical culture. But towards the end of the second period, it was driven to the defensive and developed features which were opposed to its former spirit of tolerance and assimilation.

It was in this condition that the caste system came once more under the sway of a new economic and political system, namely European capitalism.

When the English first came to power in India they did not proceed at once to disturb her economic organization. They were more interested in gathering gold by trade—and where possible by plunder—than in ruling the country for its own sake. But as political power gravitated into their hands they used it in making the investment of British capital safe in India. And with the growing domination of British capital, India's economic and also her social life slowly came under the wheels of change. India was converted from a self-sufficient and manufacturing as well as exporting country into a dependency of England. Formerly men cultivated crops not merely for money but mainly to satisfy their wants. Hand-made goods were manufactured in the country and gave employment to thousands of craftsmen and petty traders. But now agriculture was converted

into a different kind of occupation. In some parts of India only cotton was cultivated, in others jute, and these were exported to foreign lands by mercantile firms to be finished into usable goods and then shipped back to the shores of India for sale. Many artisans, craftsmen and petty traders began to be thrown out of employment. Large numbers flocked to the land. Now the agriculturist could not meet all his wants from his own or his neighbours' labour and had perforce to submit to the dictates of British capital or the host of its torch-bearers, namely the Indian importers and exporters who earned their living by dependence on the British mercantile and political system.

Capitalism thrives upon competition and free trade, especially in the first stages. Those Indians who had helped Englishmen in transforming India's economic life for the latter's benefit, now enjoyed the fruits of their labour and became ardent champions of the benefits of free competition in industry. They began to frown upon the monopolies and state interference in economic matters which had been characteristic features of the caste system.

The consequent growth of individualism is now having serious effects upon the social and cultural life of modern India. Capitalism has gone a long way in breaking up the ancient Indian village communities. The inter-dependence of castes has become attenuated in the villages, while the caste system itself now fails on account of its political bankruptcy to guarantee monopolies to occupational groups or preserve them from the ravages of unemployment and famine.

There is consequently no longer any reason for Indians to be loyal to the caste system. Formerly 'lower' castes did not mind so much being regarded as low, for at least the system offered protection and guaranteed a certain measure of cultural freedom. But now they are straightening up their backs and claiming the same status as the higher castes. The Namasudras and Napits

claim that they are Brahmans ; the Kayasthas that they are Kshatriyas, the Vaidyas, Brahmans, and so on. The decay of the old order and the recent growth of individualism have thus been exercising a disintegrating influence upon the ancient social system of India. This has gone so far that the old spirit of tolerance, formerly exercised by Brahmans towards other cultures, is now looked upon as an attitude born of weakness. It has even been held by some eminent Indian thinkers that the complete dominance of one culture over politically weaker ones is better than the federalization practised in ancient India, as this leaves the social system weak as a war machine.

### *Anthropological Results*

Each period of history has thus been attended by a particular set of ideas moulding the character of the caste system, sometimes corroding it and sometimes bringing to it added strength. Such a body of ideas or fundamental beliefs, born out of changing experiences of life, may be called the *soul of culture*. Its character has changed from time to time, and, on every occasion, the outward form of the social organization which gave an institutional form to these ideas has also been recast in conformity with changing circumstances.

It might therefore be said that the thoughts, attitudes and experiences of mankind are always in unstable equilibrium with the outer framework of culture. The two do not move in perfect co-ordination. As a matter of fact the outer framework displays a certain lag in adjustment. The institutions of one age are thus carried over to the next, and the latter in turn brings new ideas and experiences in its own train. Fullness of life is impeded, and the need arises in every age of a living and constant readjustment of cultural forms so that human freedom and growth can be ensured to the fullest extent.



## SUMMARY

One comes across a constellation of ideas and emotions which forms the core of a community's culture. This has been designated by the term 'soul' for convenience. This body of ideas and emotions may change on account of various reasons, some of which are of internal and some of external origin.

In either case, when there is logical discord between the outer framework of culture and the so-called 'soul', change sets in and proceeds towards greater logical conformity between the two.

Human experiences are constantly subject to alteration. In consequence, culture also is in a constant state of flux.

## CHAPTER IV

### CULTURAL TRAIT: ITS NATURE AND DISTRIBUTION

AFTER HAVING GATHERED some idea about the nature of culture as a whole, we shall now proceed to define a few technical terms and see how they help in elucidating the problems of cultural history.

#### *The Cultural Trait*

If we travel across India and observe the habits and customs of different states constituting the Republic, an interesting thing is soon brought to light. Although many things are common, the culture of each has an individuality and a character of its own. Let us observe the case of two great states and see how they stand in relation to one another.

In Bengal, the chief food consists of rice which is prepared by simply boiling in water. Bread prepared from wheat-flour is also eaten, but is confined to West Bengal, and more specifically to towns rather than villages. The native dress consists of an unsewn piece of cloth and a second similar piece to cover the upper portion of the body. Within the last three generations, the style has changed considerably, the loose upper garment having been almost completely replaced by sewn pieces. The latter are either English in design like the shirt or the coat, or of North Indian origin, as in the case of the shirt called *panjabi*, which is an altered form of the *kurta*. The head of the Bengali is bare except when he is dressed after the manner of Europeans. The feet are shod in slippers of a special design which covers the forepart of the foot but leaves the back of the heel uncovered. Shoes in European style, as well as *nagras* of the Punjab are also in common use, parti-

cularly in the city of Calcutta. Slippers from Madras and Burma are imported and also manufactured in Bengal. The prevailing patterns continue to be the slipper and the shoe. The cottages are thatched with straw, but in some portions of West Bengal earthen tiles are also used as in Bihar. Hindu society is organized as in the rest of India, but inter-caste relations are slightly different here from what they are elsewhere. The Vaishnava and Sakta sects are more predominant here. Among Muslims, Sunnis are more numerous than Shias, the latter being confined only to certain parts of Calcutta and Murshidabad district.

In contrast to rice-eating Bengal, wheat and millets form the staple food of the Punjab. Rice is also eaten, but generally by the richer classes as an additional item of diet. Clarified butter is freely used in food specially in the preparation of curries. In Bengal vegetable oils like mustard and occasionally sesamum or coco-nut, are used instead of clarified butter for cooking. The dress of both men and women consists of sewn trousers and upper garments. Women wear an unsewn piece of cloth in addition to their dress as a sort of veil. Men occasionally wear unsewn cloth as in Bengal, but the manner in which it is worn is totally different. The head is always covered with a turban for it is considered very improper to go bare-headed. *Nagra* slippers cover the foot completely in front and behind. In certain towns women also wear a lighter variety of slipper as in Bengal, but this is specifically known as the 'Calcutta' type. Thatched huts are uncommon. The climate here is dry and mud-houses have flat roofs made of wooden-boards with earth to cover them. Only in the more rainy Himalayan district of Kangra, where rice is also grown, do we come-across cottages thatched with straw or tiles of slate. The Hindus, called Sanatanis here, are divided into various castes as in Bengal, and Saivism is more in favour than other forms of Hinduism. The Sanatanis are comparatively few in

number, while Muslims and Sikhs form the majority. Muslims are predominantly Sunnis, but there is also a small and powerful reformist section, called the Ahmadiyas, among them.

Proofs of the similarity and difference between various states can thus be easily multiplied. But from what has been said above it is evident that although culture everywhere consists of similar components like material traits, social systems, etc., the elements composing them are not the same everywhere. Each of these distinguishing items is called a *trait* in Anthropology. The study of cultural traits gives us a convenient means of investigating the relation between different cultures. If the same trait appears in two civilizations, it is likely that there has been some historical connection between the two. Through the history of a particular cultural trait we can learn many things about the cultural history of a region. It is therefore necessary to enter into some detail regarding the internal structure of a cultural trait.

### *Rice*

Rice forms one of the distinguishing traits of the material culture of Bengal. Let us examine what other cultural features have gathered round this article in the province.

Paddy-fields are firstly ploughed with the aid of a pair of bullocks. They are harnessed to a yoke which has pegs inserted towards the middle in such a way that the animals cannot come too close to one another when taking a corner. This differs from the yoke attached to bullock carts where the pegs are inserted at the outer extremities instead.

This is how paddy is cultivated. Seeds are first sown in small nurseries, from where the seedlings are later transplanted to the regular fields. After ripening, the corn is reaped with sickles and threshed. In



certain parts of Bengal, specially in the eastern districts, the ears of corn alone are cut and brought home. They are laid on the threshing floor and bullocks driven round and round over them to separate the grains by treading. The straw is afterwards cut and brought home. In West Bengal, on the other hand, the straw is directly cut and brought home in bundles, where it is first beaten upon flat wooden boards for threshing. If this is not considered enough, then the sheaves are trodden over by teams of bullocks as in other parts of Bengal. When the grains have been separated, they are either boiled slightly or merely soaked in water for husking. Husking is performed by means of an apparatus called the *dhenki* which consists of a heavy wooden lever attached to a short stand near the ground. A thick pestle is fitted perpendicularly at one end of the beam. The lever is worked by one or two women who step on and off the other end of the beam. The pestle falls into a hole in the ground with a lining of hard wood, while a third woman manipulates the grains which are hulled within.

Rice which has not been parboiled is considered ceremonially clean. It is used in religious offerings and also as an article of food by widows and orthodox people. In a powdered form such rice is made into an emulsion with water and used for drawing decorations on the ground during religious celebrations.

Rice to be cooked is boiled in a large quantity of water, the surplus being thrown away after the rice has been cooked soft. Many kinds of cakes are also prepared from powdered rice during festive occasions.

There are a number of ceremonial restrictions connected with the use of cooked rice. A person belonging to an inferior caste may accept cooked rice from one which ranks higher, but the reverse can never take place. As a matter of fact, this is considered the chief indication of the social position of a particular caste

with reference to another. When a girl first enters the home of her husband just after marriage, she has to serve cooked rice to the relatives of her husband. This is the sign of formal admission of the bride into her husband's family. The same procedure is adopted when an excommunicated person is readmitted into his caste after expiatory ceremonies. When a person dies in a house or when a child is born the family is put under ritual defilement, and this is indicated by people refraining from taking cooked rice from the hands of the family members until the purificatory ceremonies are over.

Rice thus plays a very important part in the ceremonial life of Bengal. It is also used in connection with magical practices. When an article is stolen a medicine-man is called in and he distributes a quantity of rice over which incantations have been pronounced to suspected persons. The latter are asked to chew the rice thoroughly and spit out the contents. It is believed that the guilty person is sure to spit a quantity of blood along with the rice.

#### *Definition of Trait-complex and Element*

A large number of cultural elements have thus clustered round the principal foodstuff of the province of Bengal. They consist of material traits like a distinctive type of yoke, the husking machine, ceremonial elements like caste rules, habitual actions connected with the technical processes of planting, sowing, reaping, etc., as well as a number of magical beliefs and practices. Each of these isolable and irreducible components is called an *element*, while, taken as a group, the elements are said to form a *trait* or *trait-complex*.

Sometimes the nucleus of a trait-complex is a material object like rice, sometimes it is an idea like that of God and our relation with Him as in the case of Vaishnavism and sometimes, again, it may be a parti-

cular form of social organization as in the caste system of India. Although material traits, social systems, beliefs, etc., altogether compose a particular trait-complex, it is in accordance with the nature of its nucleus that the trait is posted in one or other of Wissler's components of culture.

### *The Continuity of Culture*

It has already been said that culture is adaptive behaviour which has become institutionalized. It is thus possible to transmit culture from one social group to another separated both in space and in time. This transmission takes place with the aid of the nucleus of a cultural trait. Thus, in the previous example, when one tribe adopts the cultivation of rice from another, it not only learns the technical processes but also imbibes many of the beliefs and customs attending its use in the parent country. It is through the intermediation of a cultural trait that a culture is actually transmitted from one generation to another or from one country to another far away.

### *Changes affecting a Trait-complex*

It might be stated as a general rule that the ideas underlying a trait change considerably with new historical experiences. When one part of a trait-complex thus changes, the rest of the trait also undergoes corresponding modification. But a trait-complex may also change its form in an altogether different manner. When a trait is introduced into a new country, it may be recast in accordance with patterns prevailing in that country. This has nothing to do with central ideas, but is essentially a formal and mechanical process.

We shall now try to illustrate the processes of change undergone by a trait-complex with the help of some Indian examples.

*Classification and Examples of Change in the  
Character of Trait-complexes*

The character of a trait-complex changes in one or other of the following ways, addition or substitution of elements, deletion of old ones, or modification in accordance with a foreign pattern. Of these, the second process has an intimate connection with the distribution of a trait-complex and we shall deal with it after the other two have been described.

The *holi* festival<sup>1</sup> originally seems to have been confined to the inhabitants of eastern India. It is possible that the festival was celebrated with a human sacrifice followed by that of a sheep on the following day. The sheep was committed to the flames of a bonfire along with the entrails of the human being killed previously. When the people observing it came within the fold of Brahmanism, the human sacrifice was no longer permitted. It was replaced by the burning of a human effigy or of a sheep or its effigy. Custom varies in different states and districts. In one place no effigy is burnt, but a man is compelled to jump through the flames of a bonfire and then paid for his troubles. A substitution of elements has thus taken place on account of a change in public opinion.

A trait-complex may also gather new elements in course of time, such elements not forming an essential part of the trait. It is necessary to distinguish this from the above example of organic elaboration. It can be conveniently termed *accretion* or *secondary elaboration*. It might be taken as a general rule that accretion is a slow process. Its amount is therefore sometimes used for comparing the relative age of two trait-complexes when they belong to the same category. But, as the actual rate of accretion has never been determined, the results yielded by this method have a wide margin of error. Still, judiciously applied, it

<sup>1</sup> *Man In India*, VII, 1927, pp. 112-85.



can be turned to some account when no other method is forthcoming.

A suitable illustration is supplied by the same festival of *holi* which we have cited in connection with the previous rule. In the town of Lahore, one of the ritual elements held in the *holi* is formed by a number of men masquerading through public streets in the guise of popular Hindu deities. In some parts of the Punjab, *holi* is celebrated with wrestling matches. Then again, in Banaras, it is a custom to gamble on the night of *holi*. In Bengal, presents are sent to the houses of friends and relatives, these consisting of a special preparation of peas and grams encrusted with sugar and miniature temples made of sugar. None of these elements has any integral connection with the bonfire ceremony, but have just been added to it according to local taste. Naturally they increase with time and become more uniform in character if there is frequent intercourse between people of different provinces where *holi* is observed.

The history of the Sun-cult of India furnishes a good example of how a trait may be mechanically recast in conformity with a foreign cultural pattern. It may lead to the addition of new elements which may even be organically related to the trait-complex, but, still the outstanding feature is the process of recasting with reference to a prevailing pattern. That is the reason why it has been assigned a separate category in the transformation of a culture trait.

Long ago, the cult of Mithra, the Sun-god of Sogdiana in Central Asia, was introduced by a band of colonists into India. It became mixed up here with the worship of the Vedic Sun-god, and in this state it was introduced some time between the eighth and tenth centuries A.D. into Orissa. The prevailing cult of Orissa was connected with the worship of Jagannath. The principal festival of Jagannath consists of a car-festival in which the idol is carried in procession for a couple of miles in a lofty

wooden car built for the occasion. Round about the temple of Jagannath at Puri there are sixteen small shrines for minor deities to guard the eight points of the compass. When the cult of Mithra was properly established in Orissa, a temple was built at Konarak and an idol installed there. Sixteen small shrines were built all over the area and held sacred to Mithra in the same manner as in Puri. A car-festival was finally started in imitation of Jagannath. Mithraism was thus changed to such an extent that it would not have been possible to establish the identity of the deity at Konarak with Mithra had it not been for literary references and certain important features in the iconography of the deity.

### *The Infrequency of Inventions*

Among the various processes of modification considered above, it should be noted that the addition of absolutely new elements is very much rarer than the addition of elements from similar trait-complexes. As a matter of fact, true invention, either of form or of ideas, occurs as rarely in cultural history as mutants in biology. Newness generally comes from the incorporation of elements from like traits or the reshaping of a trait in conformity with a pattern which in itself is old. Newness from the addition of absolutely new elements is thus a rare phenomenon in cultural history.

### *Cultural Centre*

The civilization of Greece played a very great part in the evolution of modern European civilization. Democracy and scientific method form two of the outstanding traits of modern European civilization, and they are known to have been originally derived from Greece. With the expansion of European races all over the world, these two have now spread to countries like China and India, where they are now playing an important part in poli-

tical, economic and social developments. In anthropological terminology, a centre of cultural diffusion like Greece would be called a primary centre of diffusion or merely the centre of origin, while England which has mainly been instrumental in introducing those ideas to India, would be called a secondary centre of dispersal.

The idea of cultural centre should not be confused with its geographical position. The history of the expansion of European culture in India would show us clearly why it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the two.

After the discovery of America and the rise of Spain and Portugal to power, there was a race and a scramble for supremacy among the kingdoms of Western Europe. This continued through the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The political condition of India about this time was remarkably unstable. The Mughal power used to maintain a heavy army ; while, at the same time, it had estranged itself from the sympathy of the natives of India by the pursuance of an imperialistic policy. The spirit of the Indian people had also began to assert itself and was represented in the rise of the Marathas, Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs. This also had partially weakened the supremacy of the Mughal power.

It was by accident that France and England entered into relations of trade with India exactly at this juncture. Holland and Portugal had appeared earlier on the scene but had failed to make any lasting impression upon India as conditions had then been somewhat different from what they were now.

France and England engaged in long wars for supremacy on Indian soil. In the course of these wars both countries took an increasing interest in local political developments. By cleverly manipulating existing political forces, as well as by virtue of superior organization, England ultimately succeeded in consolidating her own power in India. In the meantime, France changed her

foreign policy and the field was left practically clear for English adventurers.

For a considerable number of years England principally continued to trade in the manufactures of India. She then took up the work of collecting revenue on behalf of the Muslim rulers as part of her business. This placed Englishmen in a peculiarly advantageous position in Bengal and other parts of India. It was only after the Mutiny of 1857 that the supremacy of the Mughal emperor was finally overthrown and the British took over the administration of India into their own hands. It was after that event that they turned their attention to a systematic reorganization of the economic life of India, in the interest of Great Britain. India was turned from the position of a manufacturer and exporter of finished goods to a mere supplier of raw material for British industries and a buyer of the products of these industries. The principal industry of the land, spinning and weaving was suppressed; while the cultivation of such crops as jute, cotton, rice and indigo was stimulated by means of high prices. Other industries were also crippled, until finally India found herself dependent upon the sale of her goods in foreign markets even for a supply of the elementary necessities of life.

The instrument for bringing about these fundamental changes was the government which was established in India by Britain. It took time to consolidate power; and it was discovered in the process that unless there was local co-operation, it would not be possible to run the administration by constantly fetching men from thousands of miles away. Hence, the British Government in India sought an ally on the soil of India. A new class of people educated in English was created in order to help government to carry on the work of administration, while merchants were organized to help the growth of English business in India. The government deliberately tried to create a new set of Indians who would



be 'Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.'<sup>2</sup> A premium was placed upon English education and Indians wishing to join government service therefore readily began to learn English. Many private and missionary schools had already been established to impart such education, even before 1835. But the government extended its aid in this matter in that year, thus adding a fresh stimulus to the spread of English education. In 1841, it decided to give preference in governmental service to those who had been educated in English schools directly under government management.

We have already seen how the spirit of India had been asserting itself in the rise of the Marathas and the Sikhs. These powers had been practically destroyed by internal dissension and also by the political machinations of the British Government. A spirit of pride, however, still lay dormant among the Indian people. From after the middle of the nineteenth century, English contact was itself turned into an instrument of national revival. Political organizations were established after the Western model, while newspapers, schools and colleges spread the ideas of liberty, or of the supremacy of the individual over society. Reason came to be valued more than tradition in social life and the social life of Bengal and other parts of India were deeply affected by these changes in ideas, just as economic life had already been considerably altered under the dominance of British capitalism.

From the anthropological point of view, the ideas of democracy or representative government, and of the supremacy of reason over tradition, of science over belief, which had started from the shores of Greece ultimately to affect the whole of Europe, now reached the shores of India in the wake of a number of warring European adventurers. In the present instance, numerous factors

<sup>2</sup> Macaulay's Despatch on Education, 1835, quoted in *Western Influence in Bengali Literature*, Priyaranjan Sen, Calcutta, p. 67.

conjointly brought about the observed effect. The mere presence of certain ideas in Greece would not have turned her into a centre of cultural dispersal without the intermediation of Western European powers. If the political condition of India had been different from what it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European influence could never have gained the firm foothold which it actually did. If again, the Indian people had not wanted to profit by European contact, ideas like those of democracy or science would not have been absorbed into Indian culture as they have actually been.

Thus, a large number of historical accidents have operated conjointly to bring about the observed effect. The fact that a country once served as a centre of dispersal does not, therefore, give it a privileged position in cultural history. The geographical concept of cultural centre should, therefore, be taken as a convenient symbol for denoting that a series of unique events led to the conversion of a particular place as a centre of cultural dispersal at some period of its history.

### *Diffusion and Conduction*

A cultural trait can be carried from one country to another by traders, as in India, or by colonists, as in the case of America or Australia. A trait may also be handed on from tribe to tribe until it happens to cover a wide area. The distribution of tobacco has partly taken place in this manner in India. The article was first introduced by European merchants into the court of the Great Mughals, from where it spread rapidly to all classes of the population. In course of time, the hillmen of Orissa also learnt its use from their Hindu neighbours. Thus, tobacco was carried by a relay of tribes into the heart of the Orissan forests instead of being introduced there directly by European merchants.

Such a process of distribution is known as *diffusion*, while the other may in contrast be called *conduction*.

In cultural history, a trait seldom spreads exclusively by one or other of these means. The two processes work together, so that the terms should be employed chiefly to distinguish two phases of the same process of cultural distribution.

### *Cultural Province*

The geographical area covered by a cultural trait at any given point of time is called its *province*. The dimensions of a cultural province may vary within wide limits.

We have already said that the cult of Jagannath forms the principal religious trait of Orissa. From that centre the cult has been carried by pilgrims into the neighbouring provinces of Bengal in the north and Chotanagpur and Bihar in the north-west. Stray temples of Jagannath are met with as far west as Rajputana. The area included by the outermost points where the deity is worshipped forms the province of the trait-complex. This is no doubt a wide geographical area. But when we place it side by side with the province of a trait like rice, which covers the whole of India, South-East Asia, China and Japan, it does not appear very large in comparison. No geographical limit can be set upon the dimensions of a cultural province. Tobacco, for instance, covers the whole world, while a religious trait like Sikhism is limited to a small portion of the north-west corner of India.

The question naturally arises as to whether the distribution of a trait progresses with time or not ; and also whether all kinds of trait-complexes have a uniform rate of transmission. We shall, therefore, study a few cases of distribution and form an idea of the influences which regulate the process.

### *Influences regulating Distribution*

It is not always true that a trait covers a wider area as it grows in age. In other words, the dimensions of a cul-

tural province are not directly proportional to the period of time under consideration. Many civilizations have disappeared from the face of the earth. Some of their elements may have escaped obliteration, but considered as a whole, the influence of these cultures has gradually decreased with the progress of time. The culture of the American Indians, for example, has been subjected to decay after its contact with European civilization. It may have contributed some elements like maize to Euro-American culture, but as a cultural individuality it is now in ruins, and its spatial extension has also become extremely limited.

But we must not forget that the time factor does act in a certain way in cultural history. If the conditions affecting a culture are helpful, and if it is actually in the process of expansion, then time is of some account. So also when a culture is in decline, the unhappiness caused by it through lack of adjustment to changed conditions of life naturally increases in intensity with the passage of time and its final dissolution is also hastened thereby. So when we say that distribution is proportional to time, it must be taken to mean that it is true in both directions.

Secondly, the nature of a particular trait is responsible, to some extent, for its distribution. The Kol tribe of the Orissan hills learnt about the use of rice from Hindu settlers in their neighbourhood. They no longer depend upon fruits and tubers from the jungle for sustenance, but have not turned agriculturists like the Hindus. In adopting the rice-complex, the Hos of Seraikela in Orissa have also begun to use the special type of yoke and wooden husking mill employed by Hindu farmers. They also hold that sun-dried rice is better than the par-boiled variety for ceremonial purposes. But they do not know how to prepare cakes from powdered rice, nor do they use its emulsion for drawing decorative designs on festive occasions. They have not learnt the use of rice for detecting miscreants magically, as in Bengal. The trait has thus been carried from the Hindus to the



Hos after surrendering a few elements. The nucleus of the trait-complex was readily adopted, but some of the associated ideas and technical processes, for the preparation of rice, which are of a more complicated nature, were left behind in the process of transmission.

The Hos have thus taken a material trait from Hindu civilization, but they have remained practically unaffected by the Hindu social system or by beliefs and ceremonies connected with Hinduism. Ideas can hardly be taught to a tribe with whom there are few points of social contact. It is however possible to influence them economically without social intimacy, thus bringing about an adoption of material traits. A material trait has consequently more chances of distribution than a trait of religion or of social organization.

Thirdly, the difference in morphological character between the two cultures concerned in distribution is responsible, to some extent, for the character of distribution. It is easier for a trait to be introduced from one agricultural civilization to another than for it to be propagated to a civilization of a different character. In the former case a slight modification renders it suitable for incorporation, while in the latter more resistance is offered because the habits, ideas and beliefs are all likely to be oriented in a different direction.

The European ideal of the emancipation of women and of their treatment as equals has been accepted by the Hindus of Bengal as an ideal without any drastic change in culture, but the same idea could only be accepted by the Hos and Mundas after conversion to Christianity.

Fourthly, the dimensions of a cultural province are determined partly by the mode of transmission, i.e. whether it takes place mainly by conduction or by diffusion; as well as by the geographical features concerned in the process. If a missionary spirit works among a tribe, the results are naturally more extensive than otherwise.

Geographical factors play a large part in cultural distribution ; but their operation is correlated with the available means of transport. If the people are navigators, their culture would naturally extend along the coast ; if they move along river valleys, the form of their province will take a different shape ; if they are used to travel on horseback, and move without their womenfolk — thus being able to negotiate difficult roads — the form of the cultural province will be different from what it is under other circumstances. Nature offers a wide choice of physical features ; but cultural expansion is determined by those among them which are related to the prevalent means of transport. The following example will show how geography helps in the determination of cultural expansion.

North India is separated from the Deccan by the range of the Vindhya and Kaimur Hills. The Deccan plateau slopes in the north towards the Gangetic valley. There are several rivers running north and north-east down this slope and the roads which pass from North India to the Deccan run parallel to these river courses from north-east to south-west. They follow either the river courses themselves, or the water-partings which separate two river valleys.

There is also another feature in the geography of the Deccan which has had some influence on cultural expansion, as we shall presently discover. Rainfall is heavier in the north-eastern portion of the plateau than in the more western districts. Central Orissa and the eastern portion of Madhya Pradesh are covered by denser forests than the western portions of the province. On the surface of the Deccan plateau too, the centres of civilization have lain more towards the west than the east. We are not sure whether this was due to the more open nature of the country on that side or not. In any case, the Rashtrakutas, the Satavahans and the Chalukyas had their seats in western Deccan rather than in the east. Consequently, trade from northern India into the

Deccan flowed more readily through the western passes across the Vindhya Hills than along the east. Another reason which suggests itself is that the rivers towards eastern Deccan are broader and more difficult to negotiate than the same rivers farther west. This may have had something to do with the location of roads in western Deccan. It may have particularly been operative in the choice of roads for military purposes, that being one reason why the chief centres of ancient kingdoms lay rather in the west.

In any case, one result of this state of affairs has been that the western among the aboriginal tribes of the Deccan plateau have been more deeply affected by North Indian culture than those living farther east. The Vindhya Hills and their eastern extensions were inhabited from ancient times by Kolarian tribes like the Bhil, Gond, Munda, Savara, Juang, Ho, Kharia, etc. Among them the Bhils and Gonds, who inhabit the country across which the western trade routes lie, have been subjected to greater cultural change than the Munda, Ho and Savara who live away from the main southern routes. Without going into details it is perhaps enough to point out that the Bhils and Gonds have practically lost their language, while the Munda, Ho and Savara retain their own even after they have been partly affected by Hindu contact.

#### *Attenuation : Numerical and Structural*

By the *attenuation* of a trait, we not only mean that it is observed with fewer elements farther and farther away from the centre, but also that the number of men participating in its observance decreases as we approach the boundary of its province. The former may be called the *structural* and the latter the *numerical* form of *attenuation*.

Western Bengal has an original style of domestic architecture. The ridge-pole of huts is convex in out-

line, while the eaves are also curved instead of being straight, so that the thatch is part of an irregular spherical surface instead of being straight and flat. This type of hut is common in the districts of 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Burdwan, Nadia, Birbhum and Purulia. Although the temples of Bengal are not thatched with straw, they are like the curved huts in appearance, even when built of brick. Temples are sometimes made more ornate by placing two roofs side by side or by one being laid on top of another with a sort of wall separating them. Sometimes turrets are placed at the corners of the roofs and a larger one at the centre, giving rise to several varieties of temples known as the five-gemmed type, the nine-gemmed type and so on. Bengali architecture is distinct in its individuality and has developed into several varieties in the land of its origin.

If we travel from Bengal towards Chotanagpur the Bengali hut gradually decreases in number. Near Jhalda, which lies between the headquarters of Purulia and Ranchi, the number of curved roofs is evenly matched with the tiled flat roofs of Bihar. As we travel further west the curved roofs disappear altogether giving place entirely to Bihari cottages. Then again, typical Bengali temples are rarely met with in Chotanagpur. There are a few temples at Ramgarh belonging to this style but they belong only to the five-gemmed variety. Nowhere do we meet with the double or superimposed roofs as in Bengal. Farther west, in Rajputana and Central India, the Bengali roof has given rise to a special type of balcony covered with a convex roof which is called '*Bangali Jharokha*'. It is rarely used in independent structures—except in such cases as at Omkareswar on the Narbada—but such buildings are never large.

The Bengali style of architecture has thus become both structurally and numerically attenuated towards the west of its centre of origin.



*Attenuation in Another Sphere*

The phenomenon of attenuation is however not confined to space or the character of a trait alone. It is also observed when we trace it through a succession of tribes, or through different classes within the same population, when the latter has resulted from the integration of formerly discrete communities. In this case it might be termed *stratigraphic attenuation* for want of a better name.

When a number of tribes are included within the province of a trait-complex it is a general rule that the tribe which invents it observes the trait with more elements than another which merely adopts it from other tribes; for the ramifications of a trait-complex are more numerous in the medium of its discovery than in that of its accidental incorporation.

Vedic culture was at first confined to a certain migrant people in northern India. From them it gradually spread among the original inhabitants of the land. Vedic ceremonies connected with marriage or the custom of offering food to the manes were introduced by the former among the latter who still continued to observe some of the ancient tribal ceremonies in a changed form. If we trace the two sets of ceremonies relating to marriage and death up and down the scale of castes, we observe that Vedic ceremonies preponderate among Brahmans while the other set grows in intensity as we move down the social scale. This fact helps us to recognize who the original carriers of the two civilizations were.

*Composite Formation*

Another important result of cultural expansion is the growth of mixed traits. When two cultures come into contact, similar traits occasionally fuse with one another to give rise to *composite formations*. An example

from the wall-paintings of Puri district will help to illustrate the rule.

It is a custom with the inhabitants of Orissa to decorate the outer walls of their houses with coloured paintings. The common objects represented in the town of Puri are a water pot with two fishes painted alongside; groups of musicians playing on drums, flutes, cymbals and violins; a mythical double-headed bird called the Ganda-Bhairab; a cow with a woman's head, and so on. The district abounds in temples built from the eighth to the thirteenth century A.D. The latter are ornamented with geometrical and floral designs and animal and human figures; but none of them is represented in the wall-paintings of Puri. Therefore, these designs were obviously introduced later.

When the distribution of these designs is traced all over India, we find that the sign of the double-fish is present in the royal flag of Dhenkanal State in Orissa; on the car of Jagannath at Puri; as well as in the company of the figure of Ganesa in the wall-paintings of the city of Banaras. The double-fish also appears on many Mohammedan buildings in the city of Lucknow where they are generally done in stucco. As the design is more common in Uttar Pradesh than in eastern India—and as in Orissa it is presumably of recent introduction—it is probable that it was introduced here from outside. But the difficulty is that it does not appear in any Mohammedan building in Orissa, nor is there proof in Uttar Pradesh that it was prevalent in comparatively earlier times than in Orissa. When more facts are discovered along these lines, the real centre of distribution of the double-fish can perhaps be located correctly. But for the present, we shall have to be satisfied by observing that it is intrusive in Orissa and probably came from the western portion of the Gangetic plains.

A human-headed cow is a very unusual thing in Orissan mythology. The figure bears a striking

resemblance to Gabriel's human-headed horse, Boraq, in Mohammedan mythology, and it does not appear improbable that one was suggested by the other.

The double-headed bird Ganda-Bhairaba is an exact copy of a South Indian figure called Ganda-Bherunda in Tamil.<sup>3</sup> The Oriya word has no meaning at all, while the Tamil word means 'the dreadful Bherunda'. Orissa was ruled for a long time by the Eastern Ganga kings who came originally from the Tamil country. So it is likely that the design was introduced from the South into Orissa.

The wall-paintings of Puri thus contain elements introduced from other provinces during historical contacts. They came together in Orissa to give rise to an example of what has been termed, composite formation. Such a trait is called composite in order to distinguish it from simple trait-complexes which rise within a particular culture and remain practically uninfluenced by elements from other cultures.

Another example of composite formation is furnished by the Spring Festival of Bengal which is composed of the following major elements:

1. Burning of an effigy in a bonfire.
2. Its connection with agriculture.
3. Sexual licence in an attenuated form.
4. Rites centering round the swinging of an idol of Krishna.
5. Sprinkling of coloured water or powder.
6. A procession in which a mock-king is carried through the village.

When we compare this ceremony with the spring festivals of other parts of India we find that the first three elements form one group and, in their assemblage,

<sup>3</sup> H. Krishna Sastri, *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 7, 268. A. K. Coomarswami, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art and Cousens, Chalukyan Architecture. Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, Silver Jubilee Number, 1935, pp. 200-1.

are distributed all over northern, central, southern and eastern India ; while the festival is observed in its most intense form among the Kandhas of the hills lying west of Ganjam district. The Swing Festival of Krishna, on the other hand, is thickly distributed throughout Bengal and Orissa, while it is occasionally met with in Uttar Pradesh and the Tamil country. It is not found in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. The custom of sprinkling coloured powder or water as a mark of festivity was formerly associated with the worship of Madana in Madanotsava ; while, outside India, it was popular among the Persians during Nairoz Khasa or New Year's Day. The festival of the mock-king has a very restricted distribution, being confined to Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Hazaribagh district in Bihar, and certain parts of Bengal.

The amount of secondary accumulation associated with the first, the second and the fourth are also unequal. It is greatest in the first and progressively less in the other two. The centre of distribution of the first lies somewhere in eastern India, while that of the fourth, i.e. the ceremony of the mock-king, may have been situated in the ancient Sumerian empire.

The Spring Festival of Bengal can thus be resolved into three or four distinct traits having separate zones of distribution and centres of dispersal. Moreover, they seem to be of unequal age on the evidence of their secondary accumulation. In Bengal the three became fused with one another because they happened to be all celebrated in spring at dates which fell close to one another. In certain parts of India, only two of them have fused ; while in others, they still exist side by side without fusion.

### *The Result of Isolation*

When the province of a trait becomes very extensive, it often happens that the trait takes on new shapes in



different quarters of its province. As all portions of a cultural province cannot be so intimately connected with one another as to prevent the growth of local variations, it may be taken as a general rule that the wider the province, and the feebler the inter-communication between parts, the greater is the differentiation to which a trait-complex is subjected in course of time. We shall try to illustrate this with the help of an example from Indian architecture.

North India developed a specific type of temple, called the *Rekha*, some time between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. or even earlier. By the eighth century, the form had spread all over the Indo-Gangetic plain and extended southwards into the Deccan both along the eastern coastal plain to Andhra and along the west of the Peninsula to the kingdom of the Chalukyas. Examples are also found in the middle of the Peninsula, as at Alampur and near Giddalur.

The *Rekha* is characterized by a cubicle with a heavy curvilinear tower surmounted by a flattened and ribbed spheroid named *amalaka*, which is in turn surmounted by a water-pot serving as the finial. The sides of the *Rekha* are not plain, but portions of it are placed in resault which produces a number of phalanges or *pagas* on each surface from bottom up to the base of the *mastaka* or crown.

All over the province of the *Rekha* temple from Osian in Rajputana, Chamba and Almora in the Himalayas, Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh to Manbhum and Orissa in the east and Aihole and Pattadakal in the west, or Alampur and Giddalur in the valley of the Krishna, the earlier forms of the temple show more points of similarity in structure and ornamentation than those belonging to a later age. Even in the earlier period, they display marked points of differentiation; but the total amount is less than that found between forms of the temples in medieval times. A greater uniformity seems to have prevailed in Indian archi-

ecture between the eighth and tenth centuries than between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries.

During the latter period, two new types of temples appeared in Uttar Pradesh and Bengal, both of which were ultimately derived from the Rekha.<sup>4</sup> That belonging to the United Provinces may be termed the Banaras variety owing to its abundance in and round the city of Banaras. It rises like the Rekha, straight up to a certain height; but the height of the cella is greater than its length or breadth which was not so in the original Rekha. The elongated cubicle is surmounted by a tapering tower, the sides of which may or may not present a slightly curvilinear outline. The tower is reduced to a point at the top, which is then surmounted by a vestigial *amalaka*. The *amalaka* has several water-pots of diminishing size on its top to serve as the finial. The wall of the Banaras is treated in the same way as in the Rekha. The tower itself is ornamented with numerous pinnacles set upon it. Rarely, the pinnacles are absent; and then the resemblance between the Rekha and the Banaras becomes even more pronounced.

There is an internal difference between the Rekha and the Banaras types, which perhaps supplies the key as to why one developed from the other. The Rekha temple is built up in several ways inside. The walls may corbel inwards until they almost touch each other just under the *mastaka*, there being nothing between the floor and the end of the tower. Also the opposite sides may be tied together by broad flat beams stretching from one wall to another. Thus a roof is built over the cella; and there may be a second set of binding slabs higher up forming another storey above.

This is a costly construction as it involves the use of stone slabs of large dimensions which have to be

<sup>4</sup> See the author's 'Two Cases of Cultural Variation', *The Calcutta Review*, October 1935. See also, in contrast, Spooner, D. B., 'Temple Types in Tirhut' *The Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society*, June 1916.

lifted to great heights. But the interior of the Banaras is built in a different way. It is often covered by a dome, which is not built by corbelling but on the principle of the true arch. Such a dome may cover the cella with a roof, but it does not bind opposite walls together as in the Rekha. Instead, the dome has a tendency to thrust the walls outwards. Perhaps this is why the tower was never made solid and heavy over the cella as in the Rekha.

It is also probable that after the introduction of Mohammedan artistic ideals into this part of India, the older Hindu ideals of stability or permanency and dignity in architecture gave place to those of elegance and refinement. This may have been a second factor affecting the evolution of the Banaras from the Rekha type of temple.

In Bengal, on the other hand, the Rekha was subjected to a different process of transformation. The derivative of the Rekha is called a Deul here. The Deul shows some important points of departure from its parent style. The tower does not curve as gently as in Orissa, but after rising stiffly and straight almost to its upper extremity, suddenly plunges with a sharp turn inwards reducing the *mastaka* to negligible proportions. The door of the Deul is generally unlike ordinary doors. It has an open corbelled arch on its top instead of a lintel. In internal construction, the Deul is like the Rekha temple of Mokhalingam, Mahendragiri or Baramba where there is no cross-beam, but the walls corbel inwards until they touch almost at a point just under the *mastaka*. The walls of the Deul are treated with *ressaults* as in the Rekha, and in the corner phalanges of the tower there are the same *bhumi-amlas*. In the centre of the medial phalange, we find imitation *chaitya*-windows as in the case of the earlier Rekha temples. The term *deul* is a common name for temples in Orissa, but in Bengal it is specifically used to denote this particular type of

temple. The similarity of names, the presence of common designs, such as the *chaitya*-windows, which are organically unrelated to the structure, only go to prove that one is a derivative of the other.

Let us now enquire as to how the particular development of *Rekha* to *Deul* took place in Bengal. *Rekha* temples all over India are built of stone. But in Bengal it is difficult to procure stone, and *Deuls* were made of brick. Probably the substitution of stone by brick may have had something to do with the change in outward form. The Bengali architect perhaps failed to build up a tower in brick with the same gentle curve as in Orissa; so he made it straight up to as far high as he dared. A change in the materials of construction as well as lesser skill in building curvilinear towers went hand-in-hand with other forces in converting the *Rekha* into the *Deul* of Bengal.

If Bengal, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh had been in closer inter-communication, the observed change in aesthetic ideals, methods of construction and lack of engineering skill would perhaps not have come into being; and the total differentiation of the *Rekha* would, in that event, have been less than what it actually was.

### *A Factor which helps Isolation*

We have thus learnt that cultural traits tend to spread from one place to another, and also that during transmission it is subjected to many kinds of change. It may be taken as a general rule that differentiation is directly proportional to territorial expansion or diffusion through communities, and that it grows more intense if the different quarters of a cultural province fall out of touch with one another. Now, this isolation may be intense even within narrow geographical limits.

The languages of North India mostly belong to the Indo-Aryan family. Gujarati, Marathi, Hindustani,

Bihari, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya are all branches of the same stock. Similarly, the languages of the eastern highlands of middle India namely Ho, Munda, Santali, Kharia and Juang also belong to the common stock of Austric languages. The actual amount of differentiation existing between various branches of the Indo-Aryan family does not appear to exceed that observed between the above-mentioned variations of Austric languages, although the total area covered by the latter is many times smaller than that covered by Indo-Aryan.

These jungle tribes depend upon food-gathering or the chase and a poor form of agriculture for their sustenance. They are in chronic want and have hardly any surplus left for trade. The inhabitants of the plains of North India, on the other hand, have a highly developed system of agriculture and manual industries, and there is frequent inter-communication between them for trade and other purposes. The poverty of the jungle tribes may explain why they have had little intercourse with other people, even when they live within easy reach of one another. This perhaps explains why their languages have differentiated more through isolation than branches of Indo-European when equal areas of both are taken into account.

Differentiation thus increases if there is less intercourse between various parts of a cultural province. In other words, it is inversely proportional to the frequency of intercourse just as it has already been described to be directly proportional to tribal or communal and territorial expansion.

#### SUMMARY

A trait is a distinguishable and isolable unit formed of certain traditional ways of action and of feeling, centering round objects, which may be tangible or intangible.



The particular constellation of traits at any specific point of time in the life of a community is its culture for that period in its history.

Each isolable element which enters into the composition of a trait is known as an element.

Traits are variable in character. They may change in various ways. Modification may be brought about by the addition of new elements, deletion of old ones, recasting in accordance with changing public opinion or under the powerful stress of other patterns of culture.

## CHAPTER V

### CONTACT OF CULTURES<sup>1</sup>

THE SUBJECT OF the present chapter has an intimate bearing upon the question of cultural distribution as well as upon questions of a more fundamental nature. We have to determine first of all, in what manner precisely, a cultural object is transmitted from one community to another, and what the factors are which either facilitate or retard its introduction into a new cultural region. The contact of two cultures also induces changes in their internal character, and our second task is to find out if those changes are subject to generalization or not.

But the most important problem connected with cultural conflicts is formed by its relation to human nature. In what way are historical changes determined by the primary biological needs of mankind? Or, are historical changes actually independent of human nature? It has been indicated in Chapter II, that the content of culture is dependent on the needs of mankind and its form results from certain specific characters belonging to the human species. Our purpose now is to see if proofs of the operation of the same biological forces can be discovered in readjustments which follow the conflict of cultures. In other words, the problem is, can we find support for the biological theory of culture in its operation just as we obviously do in relation to its structure? These are some of the vital problems connected with cultural contact, and this is also the reason why its study occupies so much importance in anthropology.

It is sometimes suggested in anthropological circles

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on the author's article 'The Contact of Cultures', published in *The Calcutta Review*, 1935, January, February, March.

that the contact of peoples is the most vital event in cultural history. It stimulates invention, and in the history of a trait, the question of origin is of the foremost significance. But we know that the value of culture lies in its relation to man's life ; consequently, in cultural history, the question of origin ought to have the same secondary importance as is occupied by the date and place of birth of a great man in relation to the forces which mould his character and give him worth among his fellowmen. We do not agree with anthropologists of a particular school in considering the origin of a trait to be the most significant event in its history ; but we do concur with them in regarding cultural contact as an event of prime importance in cultural history.

### *The Character of a Stable Culture*

A culture which has been in peaceful existence for a fairly long time develops a certain unity with the ideas and aspirations of the people whom it serves. Such a culture is sustained by a more or less stable economic framework. The economic relations of men in a happy and prosperous community settle down into a stable form which continues unchanged so long as the manner of life is not substantially altered. If the food supply remains constant and the relation of different social groups carries satisfaction, the culture continues to be, more or less, as it was before. If the former, however, begins to fail, then the first impulse of the people is directed towards finding a repetition of the same environment by migration to new areas ; or the adoption of some arrangement like infanticide or birth-control designed to keep the population within bounds, and thus maintain the food supply or standard of living at its former level. In this way, any change in the established habits of the people is avoided, for that is a thing which men seem to be least willing to do. If, however, the new historical situation forces famine upon the

people or introduces such ideas among them as run counter to established social relations, then the culture is subjected to forces of disruption. This has already been discussed in connection with the history of caste in Chapter III. But our present task is to discover the forces which actually guide the selection of traits or of ideas, as well as to examine mental states which accompany cultural change, and what light all these throw upon the biological character of man, which is the central problem of anthropology. We shall, therefore, begin our study with a few examples of cultural conflict from Indian history.

### *The Case of Orissa*

Orissa was a free and prosperous kingdom between the tenth and thirteenth centuries of the Christian era. The kings who ruled at that time were great conquerors and their realm extended all over the eastern coast from Bengal to the Godaveri delta. It was a common ambition with these kings to build temples in honour of their tutelary deities. This provided plenty of occupation to a large number of architects, sculptors and painters. The kings also looked upon Brahman scholars with great respect and sought their advice in matters relating to society. They favoured these scholars with free grants of land and Orissa is even now studded with Brahman settlements which date from ancient times.

The fate of Orissa, however, turned in the thirteenth century. From that time onwards, up till the seventeenth century, the land was, again and again, overrun by armies from northern India. They were followed in the eighteenth century by the wandering Maratha armies. The result of five centuries of depredation was that Orissa was depleted of the wealth she had hoarded by conquest and trade. Kings became poor and there was no one left to support the numberless artists and scholars who had prospered under more favourable

conditions in the past. Consequently, Orissan scholarship and artistic abilities, for which she had been famous, were practically lost from the culture of the land.

The effects of economic destitution in Orissa have not been merely confined to the disappearance of a few traits, but they can also be traced in the changed character of the residual trait-complexes. In former times Brahmans were at the head of society, and they were entrusted with the priestly and educational functions connected with the community. Khandaits were soldiers, while Karanas were in charge of clerical work. But after Mohammedan rule, the service of Brahmans or Karanas was dispensed with in state-offices and new men were recruited from Bengal for that purpose. Consequently, the upper castes were thrown out of employment and took up occupations to which they were not accustomed. This state of affairs has continued up to modern times; and we meet with Khandaits who have taken to the plough, Karanas who work in stone, Brahmans who cultivate garden crops, and so on. The entire economic arrangement has been dislocated and the caste system, as a trait-complex, has changed in character, because occupations which were more strictly hereditary in former times, have now become very much less so.

### *Effects of Economic Change*

As a result of economic changes, therefore, some traits tend to disappear from a culture while others continue in a modified form. There are still others which survive an economic shock without any appreciable change. We read in Abul-Fazl's account of Orissa in the *Ain-i-Akbari* (sixteenth century) that the people of the country boiled rice, steeped it in water and ate it on the second day. This custom prevails even now. The reason is that elements like these are practically



devoid of economic value ; it is all the same whether a man boils rice for eating it fresh today or keeps it overnight for tomorrow's consumption. „Such elements naturally remain unaffected by economic disturbances in a country.

We may, therefore, generalize our observations and say that several kinds of modification are brought about in culture by a disturbance in its economic equilibrium. Some traits disappear, others are subjected to modification, while still others survive the shock without any change at all.

### *The Juang*

In the case of the Juang tribe, economic necessity has brought about more fundamental changes in culture than in the case of Hindu Orissa. Formerly, they lived exclusively by hunting, shifting cultivation and the collection of jungle produce. In the shifting form of cultivation, a piece of land is prepared by burning down trees and planting seeds in the ground with the help of a digging stick shod with iron. It is a wasteful method of agriculture and can support only a few people per square mile of land. The Juangs, however, practised it successfully in the extensive hills and valleys of Orissa before the interruption of Hindu colonists.

But after British rule was consolidated in Orissa, the forests were reserved, and hunting and shifting cultivation forbidden there. The little land into which the tribe was now driven was insufficient to yield sustenance according to the old method of production. The Juangs were thus faced by famine and forced to adopt the more efficient system of agriculture with the plough from their Hindu neighbours. But they have not proved as skillful with it as the Savara or the Oriya farmer, and have consequently been forced to take up supplementary occupations which differ in various parts

of Orissa. In Pal Lahara, they weave baskets and sell them to their Hindu neighbours, while in Dhenkanal their women supply from the jungles fuel to the surrounding population, and many of the men have either become share-croppers or farmers owning a small measure of land. Out of the money now earned by selling their wares or farm produce, the Juangs either pay rent or buy salt, cloth or distilled wine. They have thus been hitched on to the Hindu economic system and are now on the way to the formation of a new Hindu caste. They have already begun to worship deities like Lakshmi, Dharma and the like, but some of them continue to do so with their own tribal ceremonies. The language of the Juangs in Dhenkanal has been subjected to greater modification than in Pal Lahara; and in this way, perhaps it will not be long before they gradually give it up like the Gonds of Orissa, and eventually also employ Brahman priests to help them in being regarded as full-fledged Hindus, if they become sufficiently prosperous.

The history of the Mundas of Chotanagpur must have followed a similar course before we come upon them in the beginning of the nineteenth century when Christian missionaries first settled among them in the Ranchi district. Already the tension between Hindu settlers and the Mundas had become so acute in the last decade of the eighteenth century that troops had to be called in to suppress uprisings among them.<sup>2</sup> Things had continued in much the same way as before until missionaries came forward to help the poor people to fight against Hindu zemindars in the law-courts. The help was greatly appreciated and led to a large-scale conversion of the Mundas to Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The old culture is fast disappearing from among the converts. They are taking up numerous new occupations like

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Mundas and their country*, 1912, p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Conversions in Bengal described in a book entitled, *Rural Life in Bengal* by the author of *Anglo-Indian Domestic Life*, London, 1866, p. 180. The author was Colesworthy Grant.

tailoring, lace-making, carpentry, and their dress and personal adornments give evidence of numerous changes, which can be observed in these tangible elements of culture as well as in the characteristics of their newly developed personality.

In Orissa, cultural change was not as deep as it had been with the Juangs or Mundas. Particular occupations became economically bankrupt and people took to others in their place. But religious beliefs and social customs were not very much affected on that account. In the case of the hill-tribes, there was a second factor besides economic depletion, namely, the presence of another culture backed by a heavy economic premium. It was practically one of the conditions laid down for the Juangs that they could survive only if they gave up their wasteful system of production, and adopted the more efficient one practised by those who had subjugated them. There was a third factor also, which partially helped in the process of decay of aboriginal culture; and that was the virtual absence of any pride among either the Juangs or the Mundas with respect to their own tribal culture. Now that conditions had changed, their own culture only served to keep them on hungry stomachs; and naturally they could feel little pride in something which failed them in the hour of their need. But if in any contact of cultures, such a sense of pride survives among the vanquished people, naturally the end-product of change is different from what it is likely to be otherwise.

We shall now turn to the history of modern Bengal which offers a good illustration of all the above forces working together, namely, the economic failure of an old culture by invasion of the economic system of another, the immediate presence of a second culture, and thirdly, the presence of a lingering sense of self-respect or pride among the vanquished people.

*The Case of Bengal<sup>4</sup>*

We have already seen that the backbone of Hindu society was formed by the economic organization of caste. Castes were interdependent; but when Bengal was converted from a manufacturing country into a producer of raw materials, the artisans and craftsmen of Bengal found themselves faced by a crisis.

The peasant who formerly bought cloth from the village weaver and paid him partly in cash and partly in kind, now sold his produce for cash to the agents of English exporting firms and purchased with that money his cloth from Lancashire. His friend, the Weaver, was consequently thrown out of employment and forced to seek the position of a hired labourer in industry. He either migrated to mills where jute was baled for export into England to swell the rank of unskilled labourers, or, if he remained in the village, he became a landless agricultural labourer at the mercy of the landed proprietors. The Weaver, the Tanner, the Coppersmith were, one by one, all brought together under the same profession. But as existing rules prevented intermarriage between castes, the new situation did not lead to their fusion forming a new caste on the basis of identity of occupation. Due to various reasons, occupation was no longer recognized as the chief proof of caste; it was birth which fixed a man's caste for ever. In other words, the caste system too changed in its character when British capitalism came upon the scene.

As the old arts and crafts decayed, the people of the land became poorer and grew more and more discontented with life. Under these circumstances, two currents of thought ran side by side among the educated people of Bengal. One group idealized the past and thought that safety lay in a return to old conditions, while the other thought that this morbid love for the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the author's *Modern Bengal*, Calcutta, 1959.

past had to be overcome before any satisfactory social reconstruction could be made. While conservatives and liberals thus quarrelled over the maintenance of the old social system, British rule went on, all the while, slowly transforming India's economic life so as to convert it not into another England, but into a tributary of the industrial system of England, and this helped to cut the ground away from under the feet of the social system over which the quarrel raged.

### *Defeatists and Conservatives*

In the beginning, there was a frank sense of surrender, and Indians of all classes suffered from a feeling of inferiority with reference to English civilization. This led to the spread of Christian influence among educated Bengalis during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, just as it had done among the Mundas. The converts as well as many of those who came under their influence, not only extolled the religion and civilization of the West, but also thought that the natural course for India was to forsake her ancient culture and adopt European civilization instead.<sup>5</sup> Europeans were looked upon as superior not only in mental but also in physical prowess. This led to an interesting attitude towards them as proved by the following facts. In a newspaper published on 22nd January, 1825,<sup>6</sup> we find a correspondent denouncing the wearing of European clothes by Indians on the plea that it would lead to considerable scandal in society if a man in European habits were seen entering the zenana of a house. Marriage between European men and Indian women was looked upon with abhorrence,<sup>7</sup> and the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. P. C. Mozoomdar, *The Life and Teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, 1931, pp. 1-8. Ramtanu Lahiri, edited by Sir Roper Lethbridge, 1907, pp. 66 ff., 81, ch. V.; also Rajnarayan Basu *Atmcharit* (B.S. 1315), pp. 42, 71.

<sup>6</sup> Brajendranath Bandopadhyay, *Sangbadpatre Sakaler Katha*, 3rd edition (B.S. 1356), vol. I, p. 130; also vol. II, p. 236.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 255.



issue of such unions were considered as belonging to a very low caste. Food cooked or touched by Europeans was similarly taboo; and thus any possibility of social intercourse between the two communities was prevented altogether. The inferiority complex of the Indians created a feeling of mental subservience as well as of physical aversion to Europeans at the same time. No doubt, by and large, this is generally the feeling of a subjugated nation towards their conquerors. But it is probable that an undercurrent of sexual abhorrence was also mixed up with it adding a certain amount of bitterness to the rules of taboo. That, in itself, was another expression of a feeling of inferiority.

There was one phenomenon noticeable in the personal life of the English-educated young men of Bengal. In the first flush of enthusiasm over European civilization, they underrated everything connected with Indian civilization. Polytheism was considered abominable, while Reason was unconditionally apotheosized as it had been recently in the West. The Hindu moral code was thrown overboard, and as its place was not immediately filled in by the European code of morals, young men found themselves landed in a quagmire of immorality and nihilism.

As a reaction against this state of affairs, a conservative tendency reared its head in Bengali life. At first it confined itself mainly to the more prosperous among the educated people, those who had not been lain low by British domination. But later it gained in volume and drew within its fold many of the middle classes also. Due to this conservative tendency, the attention of the nation was firstly directed towards the literature and civilization of the past. Two new encyclopaedias were compiled and printed in Sanskrit about this time so as to render the old culture of the land more widely available to the general public. These were the *Sabdakalpadrumah* of Raja Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867) and the *Vachaspathya Abhidhana* of Taranath Tarkavachaspati (1812-85).

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were, later on, translated into the vernacular for the same reason, followed by that of the *Puranas* and the *Samhitas*. The literati of Bengal thus not only tried to overcome the sense of inferiority from which they suffered, but also unconsciously prepared the way for a discovery of the soul of ancient Indian civilization, before it could make that knowledge a starting point for fresh advance.

But the movement of defending the ancient culture, which grew from a lingering sense of self-respect, was sometimes carried to excess among less informed enthusiasts. Students, who had lately been reading the scientific literature of the West, now tried to read a 'scientific' meaning into every detail of Hindu ceremonial practice. Ancient literature was ransacked for proofs of the existence of fire-arms, balloons and the like. The ideal of renunciation was glorified to the point of absurdity. Its purpose was forgotten and it was praised for its own sake. It was forgotten that ancient India stood no less for the enrichment of life than any other country. It was done because Europe stood, all the while, for a material enrichment of life.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that in most of these attempts (except in such a case as the defence of the ideal of renunciation) to defend Hinduism, its champions paid unconscious homage to the West. According to them, Hindu culture was great because ancient Hindu scientists had already discovered the atom, or had invented the balloon, fire-arms or certain so-called 'modern' principles of hygiene. It was thus still a surrender of values to the West. The spirit of self-defence had been set working and was manifesting itself in a desperate endeavour to save the ancient culture from annihilation. National pride needed some food to thrive upon.

<sup>8</sup> Sarkar, Jadunath, *India through the Ages*, p. 112 f.

*The Liberal Brahmo Samaj Movement*

The first movement of a healthy character which resulted from national self-consciousness led in the third decade of the last century to the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj under the leadership of Raja Rammohun Roy (1774-1833). The movement started by him was originally intended to rescue the younger generation from atheism and immorality in which Westernism had unfortunately landed them, and restore to them faith in God and a puritanic code of morals. Its second purpose was to build up a new culture out of the best in the civilizations of the East and the West. At first the Brahmo movement gained little sympathy and much opposition from the public. But when it was turned into an expression of revolt against the domination of the West under the leadership of Devendranath Tagore (1818-1905) it gathered more strength and captured the sympathy of ardent spirits who had suffered from European contact, but were too liberal to join the conservatives in their wholesale worship of the past.<sup>9</sup>

Although Devendranath thus tried to stem the tide of conversion to Christianity, yet he was not radical enough in his social opinions. A more progressive party, therefore, broke away from his leadership under Keshubchandra Sen (1838-84) who founded the Bharatbarshiya Brahmo Saraj in 1866.<sup>10</sup> But later on Keshubchandra was himself accused of introducing elements of superstition like man-worship, yoga, and certain Hindu ceremonies into the Samaj. It was also stated that he was against the complete emancipation of women.<sup>11</sup> The progressives, therefore, once more broke away to found the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in

<sup>9</sup> P. C. Mozoomdar, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Also *The Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore*, Calcutta, 1909, pp. 38-9, 40, 151-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100 ff. For Devendranath's nationalism, see Mozoomdar, pp. 102-8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168-70.

1878, which became a shade more pro-Western in its sympathies as well as in its ceremonial and organizational character. After their secession, Keshubchandra reconstituted the Bharatbarshiya Brahmo Samaj into the Navavidhan in 1880, and remodelled its ceremonies and general outlook in closer approximation to Hinduism than was the case with the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. In matters of faith also, the Navavidhan henceforward stressed the importance of *Bhakti* or devotional spirit as against the Rationalism of the Sadharan.<sup>12</sup>

Within a short time, however, the Brahmo Samaj failed to keep pace with the spirit of the time and was relegated to the backwaters of national life. It is necessary to examine in some detail why this was so.

We have already observed that one of the principal features of the Brahmo Samaj movement was a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural elements. It is a general rule that a tribe or community readily absorbs foreign cultural elements if there is a complete absence of self-respect and a sense of surrender among them, as was the case with the Juangs or the Mundas. It also does so if it has a sufficiently large measure of self-respect left in it, and if there is no chance of loss of self-respect by such absorption. When, however, self-confidence is at a low ebb and people are afraid that they might be eventually swept off their feet through the absorption of foreign cultural elements, then they stiffen their backs and refuse to have anything to do with the latter.

This was exactly the situation in India before the fourth quarter of the last century. In every field of life, whether economic or political, Bengalis felt that they were being driven to the wall. There was complete surrender in economic life, and, under these circumstances, any little self-respect which still remained, generally encouraged a defensive attitude of mind, as

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177 and ch. XI.

in the orthodox Hindu movement. When a theistic and moral reformation was started both by the conservative Hindu community and the liberal Brahmo Samaj, people rather flocked to the former than the latter. Rich men were generally prone to be conservative ; so the Hindu revival received more financial aid and prospered more than the Brahmo Samaj movement. This may have been one of the causes of the decay of the latter.

But it appears probable that there were also other reasons for its loss of influence. The Brahmo Samaj movement had all along not only been suffering from poverty of funds, but was also torn by internal dissensions. In addition, the movements of the Samaj were confined, more or less, to religious and social life. But what the people of Bengal were suffering from more deeply than anything else, was economic submergence under British capitalism. The Brahmo Samaj movement was too far removed from this aspect of life to stem the tide of economic bankruptcy. What the country needed more was a movement which would satisfy the demand for freedom from spiritual and cultural oppression, as well as hold the prospect of political and economic freedom. But a movement of that kind had not yet been initiated. The immediate need, shortly after the Brahmo Samaj movement, was the restoration of self-confidence before that could be made a starting point for further advance.

### *The Neo-Hindu Movement*

This was supplied by a movement under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). The movement was not defensive in character like the one led by Raja Radhakanta Deb, but was aggressive in its general outlook. It did not try merely to defend Hinduism, but its sponsors proclaimed loudly from the housetop that Indians need not at all be ashamed of Hinduism.



Swami Vivekananda declared that Hinduism had a priceless treasure in the shape of Vedanta philosophy, and he asked the young men of India to go forth to the West in order to deliver the supreme lesson of the Vedanta which the world of today stood sorely in need of. In return, he asked the youth of India to master all the science of the West, and come back to India in order to apply the knowledge to the reorganization of the country's economic life.

In a sense, Swami Vivekananda thus advocated a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural elements; but there were two points of difference between the present proposal and that of the Brahmo Samaj. Firstly, Vivekananda's synthesis was founded upon a more militant feeling of nationalism than was the case with the Brahmo Samaj. Secondly, it did not offer any set of regulations for the nation to follow. It had not the time to settle down and work out any such formula. The Brahmo Samaj, on the other hand, had developed through decades, and had given India a completely worked out programme of social and religious life, which was compounded of Eastern and Western elements. But what Swami Vivekananda did was to accept both the East and the West in spirit — the philosophy of the East and the science and organization of the West — and so long as the foundation was on Vedanta philosophy, it did not matter to him what actual shape the culture of India was likely to take in course of time. He was not afraid of change like the conservatives. In fact, he did want India to change; but he wanted the change to be rooted in the changeless wisdom of the Vedanta.

In its total effect, the Neo-Hindu movement of Vivekananda did one thing. It turned men's attention away from the Brahmo Samaj movement, which had already been showing signs of decay, and laid the foundation of nationalism upon a resurgent form of Hinduism.

*The Increasing Western Tide*

In the year 1905, Japan gained her famous victory over Russia; and the event proved to be of great significance to India. The news of an Eastern nation having humbled a great European power swept from one end of the country to another like a welcome blast of fresh air. The history of the Russo-Japanese war was published in Bengali, and portraits of Japanese heroes were published in vernacular papers for the nation's admiration. As an immediate result of this, the Westernist movement received a new turn in Bengal, for it was known that Japan had become great only after the adoption of Western methods. Swami Vivekananda had died in the meanwhile, and as there was no one now to counteract the rising wave, the nationalist-minded intellectuals of the country went over once more to Westernism. The latter was once more at a premium. But this was unlike the surrender movement of the first part of the nineteenth century. Now the West was accepted, because it yielded weapons by means of which India could forge her implements of national emancipation. There was thus a radical difference between the two.

Societies and funds were organized during the first decade of the twentieth century in order to send students to Europe, so that they might equip themselves with the scientific and technical knowledge of the West. A boycott movement was also initiated against England in order to cripple her position in the market of India. The cotton-mills of Bombay and Ahmedabad profited immensely from this wave of nationalism; but the net result, so far as the economic revival of India was concerned, was of a negligible character. Along with the initiation of the boycott movement, active political organizations of a secret character were also founded in order to overthrow British rule in India. The Indian National Congress

also changed its leadership and character about this time. From a mere petitionary body it was transformed overnight into a radical organization.

### *The Gandhi Movement*

Hitherto the activities of the Indian National Congress had been limited, more or less, to the educated upper and middle classes of Indian society. But the organization was transformed after the advent of Gandhi, and became the spearhead of non-violent resistance in which the masses of India began to play an active role.

In this new form of organized action, Gandhi tacitly formed an alliance with those who believed in a restoration of Hindu domination, and also with such liberals and leftists as were inclined, in their inner sympathies, towards the West. It is, however, necessary to remember that Gandhi never whittled down his own political ideals, but tried to work with anyone with whom there was a point of agreement on immediate issues.

His own political ideal was enunciated clearly in 1909 in a small pamphlet entitled *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, and it will be observed in that book that he subscribed neither to a return to the past, nor to anything which went by the name of progress. In an imaginary conversation with an Indian revolutionary, Gandhi defined the fundamental political problem of India in the following terms:

If you believe that because Italians rule Italy the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the King of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its

servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. At the time of the so-called national war, it was a game of chess between two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They, therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops? The gain was nominal. The reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self-rule? You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. If I have the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian.

It is indeed true that, while leading the common people of India, Gandhi employed terms like *Ram Raj*, *Varnashram* and the like; but new meanings were

always added to them, so that, in quality, they became quite different from what they popularly stood for. Thus, for instance, in Gandhi's *varnashram*, which he very carefully distinguished from caste as it is today, he said that men are born with different talents. Some are best equipped to serve their fellowmen through intellect, others through prowess, and so on. In an ideal society, every man's talents must be utilized for the full benefit of the society in which he lives and which he serves. But, following Tolstoy, he also tried to make it clear that no matter what a person's special talents were, he was subject to the law of bread-labour. By that was meant that every man was morally bound to produce by means of body-labour the equivalent of what he consumed for the maintenance of his body. Any man who shirked this responsibility was, in his opinion, a thief, because he lived on the toils of others.

There were various other terms which similarly sounded conservative, but to which Gandhi always added an original meaning which was of revolutionary significance.

Perhaps this was one of the mechanisms by means of which Gandhi kept himself rooted in the past, and yet tried to carry India forward in directions radically different from ancient tradition.

It has to be pointed out here that although Gandhi thus succeeded in marshalling the forces of the masses, and that with the aid of the educated classes,<sup>13</sup> yet his object was the attainment of Swaraj through the organized non-violent strength of the masses. In any other case, i.e. if violence were used for the achievement of freedom, he was clear that power would gravitate into the hands of a class which wielded the

<sup>13</sup> He once wrote: "The progress of the nation cannot be arrested by any person or class. The uneducated artisans, the women, the men in the street, are taking their share in the movement. The appeal to the educated classes paved the way for them. The goats had to be sifted from the sheep. The educated classes had to be put upon their trial. The beginning had to be made by and through them."—*Young India*, 20 April, 1921, p. 122.



instrument of violence. And by that very contingency, they were likely to become distinguished from the masses who would remain where they were.

In spite of the originality of Gandhi's political ideology, it is strange that both Easternists and Westernists saw in his leadership the possibility of the attainment of Indian freedom. They flocked to his side, yet kept aloof when a crisis of ideology sharpened between them.

It must be said in respect of some educated Westernists that they stood outside the general influence of Gandhian ideology or tactics. Some were constitutionalists, liberals, who occasionally sided with Gandhi, but who stood aloof when militant action prevailed. Others, like some nationalists and communists, praised him when action was on; but believed that non-violence was no more than a cloak or preparation for violence. They tried to introduce violent action at what were considered crucial moments; and thus, like the constitutionalists, wanted to employ Gandhi's apparently magical influence among the masses to serve the interests of their own ideology.

### *Anthropological Results*

This is roughly the course of the political history of India in recent times. The reaction against European domination has sometimes strengthened the conservative and sometimes progressive tendencies; and these moods have varied in character according to the character of personal leadership. Culturally, the different tendencies have been of very great significance, as they have created biases in favour of particular brands of culture.

The press and schools came into existence in Bengal in the first flush of Western influence in the early decades of the nineteenth century; while about the third quarter of the same century, political associations were organized along the lines of the West. In the

early twentieth century, the Russo-Japanese War gave a strong fillip to the Westernist tendency when political organizations of a more active revolutionary type were built up in Bengal. There also grew up a strong opinion in favour of industrializing the country so as to bring it in line with the progressive nations of the West. On the other hand, when the conservative spirit has prevailed, it has added fresh life to decaying institutions like caste, just as it has stimulated an interest in Sanskrit or vernacular literature, or restored lost ideals in life, art and philosophy.

When again the life of the people has been oriented in a new direction, as in the Gandhi movement, it may have stimulated both the conservative and pro-Western tendencies by its challenge of action, or added strength to one or other of them in course of its own retreat ; but in moments of victory, it has also created some elements of culture which are not the repetition of anything gone by, but which are altogether new creations in cultural history. The nature of these new items, like a new method of warfare such as Satyagraha, or an idealized *varnashram*, may be unstable now, but it is a mood like this, which springs from the orientation of attention neither to the past nor to the future, but towards the problems of the immediate present, and which has apparently little justification in either the past or the present, that gives birth to a cultural object new in the history of mankind. And of such orientation intelligence and faith form the mainstay.

### *Self-defence in a Pathological Form*

In the previous section, we have traced the incomplete history of a cultural conflict in which self-respect and fearlessness proved to be growing forces. But it may so happen that after an initial display, the people admit defeat, and then the last light of self-respect flickers

down into a purely defensive attitude of mind which is almost pathological in character. In biological history too, it is a common experience that a species develops abnormal traits when it is faced by the danger of extinction. Shell-fishes develop spikes before becoming extinct; and the presence of similar defensive devices in any culture is sure proof of the low vitality of the people professing that culture. Such developments are, no doubt, unfortunate; but they are perhaps necessary to save a culture from complete extinction.

The history of medieval Hinduism supplies several relevant instances to the point. We have already seen that in the craze for puritanic reform, the rules of caste became extremely rigid in post-Mohammedan times. Through Raghunandan's influence in Bengal, women's life became a string of rites and ceremonies, while the widow's life became an unbroken round of fasts and penances. Widow remarriage was forbidden, and it was perhaps during this time that the custom of suttee became more popular.

Many of the excesses to which Hinduism degenerated during its darkest days can only be explained in the light of this morbidity of spirit. The cow, for instance, may have been held in high esteem all through the Hindu period; but the extraordinary feeling against its slaughter by Mohammedans without a corresponding feeling against other eaters of beef, is more because cow-protection became a symbol of anti-Mohammedan feeling than through any true love for the cow as such. The depression of the Sudras, the abolition of mixed marriages and of widow remarriage, the customs of suttee and similar other devices were Brahmanism's attempts to save itself from the mire of post-Mohammedan decadence. Puritanism was a reaction against the degenerate conditions of current life.

A culture thus withdraws within itself when faced

by the danger of extinction. Like shell-fish, it develops spikes so that no foreigner might enter its folds and endanger the integrity of its character. The boundaries of thought are laid down rigidly, and anyone who dares to think freely is immediately thrown out of the social body as a potentially dangerous element.

It is strange that men should behave in this fashion. If they really want to preserve the best elements of a culture, they can do so without having recourse to such crude steps as described above. But the difficulty with the majority of mankind is that it is not intelligent enough in respect of these affairs of life. Most men allow their emotional reactions to warp sober, intellectual judgments. They fail to distinguish one part of culture from another on merits; and when they become sentimentally attached to a particular brand of culture, they take the whole thing in a lump. That is why Hinduism goes with vegetarianism and cow-worship; Mohammedanism with the beard and taboo against pork; and Christianity with European dress and modern industrialism. The energy of mankind is thus run to enormous waste in trying to keep up things of no value with those which are of real worth under particular historical conditions.

Mankind will have realized the lesson of history when it becomes free from attachment to particular brands of culture, i.e. when it learns to look upon the whole of humanity as one. For that alone can save it from so much wasted effort which attends cultural change in all lands.

### *The Rule of Selective Absorption*

Let us now go back to our fundamental problem, namely, the relation of man to his culture. Our business was to find out how far cultural change is guided by biological considerations.

In our study of the Mundas of Chotanagpur, we observed that Hindu cultural traits ceased to be absorbed with readiness after the tribe came under the influence of Christian missionaries. Christianity was attended by economic advantages, while Hinduism rather exercised a disintegrating influence upon Munda culture. Thus when a choice was offered between the old Munda, Christian and Hindu cultures, the second was chosen because of its higher economic or power potential. It was the same when the Juangs gave up *jhum* cultivation and adopted the Hindu system of agriculture. This means that men select such traits as hold the promise of economic advantage, or which happen for the time being to serve as symbols of power. The same truth is borne out by our study of the modern history of Bengal. When men thought that a surrender to Western civilization was to their advantage, they allowed themselves to be biased in its favour. Again, as soon as they began to think in a different way, they resisted Western influence, first by orthodoxy, and then by communalism or nationalism.

It is interesting to observe that an element which belongs to a more powerful community, but is absent from the culture of the conquered community, is more readily adopted by the latter, in the mistaken belief that in that element, perhaps, lies the secret of the conqueror's strength. It is this power-symbolism of unfamiliar traits which helps in its ready transmission in a community with a lower quantum of power at its disposal. Through their acceptance, the less powerful group seeks to *identify itself* with the more powerful one.

Men are thus guided by economic considerations, or considerations of power in general, in their cultural preferences. And in so far as this is so, it means that cultural operations are guided by the basic instinct of self-preservation, or search for power which man shares in common with the rest of the animal kingdom.



*Personal Factors*

Sometimes extended self-interest takes the form of communalism, sometimes of nationalism, and sometimes of unity between the proletariates of all countries, according as the economic development of men bring them into closer and closer communion or identity of interest with larger and larger groups of mankind. But there always have been men who, irrespective of selfish economic interests, have thought in terms of humanism, who have looked upon all humanity as one, even when such philosophy has cost them much in terms of personal welfare. They too have been moved by a desire to establish an economic or social order so that men might be happy ; and in that far have also been actuated by the same instinct of self-preservation after having extended their sense of selfhood until it covered the whole of mankind under its wings.

But this instinctive motivation does not explain one thing. It fails to explain why a nationalist should confine his self-interest to the nation, why another like Gandhi should look upon all human beings as kin, and why again a saint like Ramakrishna should include not only human beings but even plants and animals within his circle of relationship.<sup>14</sup> This range of sympathy seems to have little relation to the degree of economic co-operation in a country, or the facility of transport available at that time. The biological and material factors behind these personal variations of selfishness or of love are not fully understood. And as long as they are thus indefinitely known, this personal factor must be regarded as an independent variable element in cultural development.

Although we do not know exactly why these circles of relationship vary and how they come into being, we can describe one thing about them whenever they are

<sup>14</sup> Romain Rolland, *Prophets of New India*, 1930, p. 142 f.n., cf. *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi*.

in advance of existing social sympathies. Men like Kropotkin or Gandhi or Ramakrishna who look beyond and dare to include more men in their circle of kinship than is usually done by their neighbours, and who try to convert others also to their point of view, have all suffered at one time of their history from a terrible feeling of loneliness and neglect. But when, by inner conversion, they succeeded in overcoming this sense of suffering and of defeat, they acted as leaders of men and helped to convert others to their wider vision of relationship. After personal conversion, they served as points of departure in cultural history, affecting not merely the philosophic outlook but also the social and economic arrangements under which they were born. Their philosophy after being institutionalized gave a new shape to culture.

Ordinarily, however, men do not dare to do so. They stick to established habits and circles of relationship current in the world around them. The average man is afraid to leave the company of his fellow men. He wants to profit by the co-operation of his neighbours. He thinks, if he leaves them, he would die. And in the last analysis, it is this fear of uncertainty, insecurity and death that keeps a man bound down to the culture in whose midst he is born. If he were free from that fear, the whole edifice of culture would break down for him like a house of cards. Indeed, it is the subservience of man's width of vision to fear which gives culture the power to rule over the lives of men ; while it is freedom from that fear which makes it possible for a man to look farther, and gives him the power to alter the course of cultural events.

But we must not suppose that absence of fear by itself generates a wider outlook in the matter of social relationship. Absence of fear merely gives a man the power to affect cultural evolution one way or the other. Whether we shall have a wider range of sympathies or a narrower one, is not determined by this factor. That

still remains a personal accident conditioned partly by education and habit, and partly by inner conversion or the will.

### *Accidents*

So far we have seen that the basic instincts of man are responsible, along with his personal moods, for cultural change. There is, moreover, a third factor involved in the process. We saw, in connection with the history of Bengal, that the Russo-Japanese war greatly stimulated the pro-Western movement in the country. Cultural events had been following a certain course, but Vivekananda's death in 1902 and Japan's success in 1905 added strength to the Westernist movement which had been comparatively languid immediately prior to the period under review. The two particular events are of course reducible to their own causes; but, so far as cultural developments in Bengal were concerned, they served as accidental happenings. They were neither organically related, nor necessitated by the existing course of events in Bengal. Such accidents are no less influential in cultural history than the accident of personal moods or of personal ranges of sympathy. Thus, they form the third independent variable in cultural history.

### SUMMARY

Four things have to be taken account of in a case of cultural contact: the central ideas, the mental attitude, content of culture and the economic framework which sustains culture.

Foreign contact may modify a certain culture through economic influences alone. During the unbalanced times following such contacts, many traits, serving the same purpose, become available. Among them those associated with the culture of the conquerors naturally enjoy superior prestige and even economic value. The

latter have consequently greater chances of adoption or continuity, while those belonging to the vanquished culture are placed in danger of extinction.

Like new material objects, new ideas also may be introduced from one culture into another. In that case, they naturally clash with the prevailing ideas of the vanquished culture and cause modification in its outward content.

The mental attitude of the vanquished people has a part to play in regard to the final result of change. If there is complete lack of self-respect or of pride in their own culture, then culture is subjected to a more profound alteration than in the contrary case. If, however, such pride is present, the vanquished culture develops certain special features by way of defence. Old ideas and institutions are overvalued, there is a loss of initiative and even the growth of certain abnormal features. When these have served their purpose by saving the culture from extinction, they disappear and the culture once more progresses in its normal course of evolution.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EVOLUTION OF CULTURE

A GENERAL OPINION is current that civilization has progressed in course of time. During the Stone Age, men lived by hunting and collecting forest produce. They clothed themselves in skin and, when the cold was severe, warmed themselves before fire. Men did not know how to make tents or build houses, nor were they acquainted with the art of preserving food or getting a regular supply of it all the year round. Their habitation was, therefore, confined to hills, which yielded flint for implements and afforded natural shelter in caves with extensive forests for game. The arts of life were few, and the struggle for existence was also very severe. The distribution of mankind was, therefore, limited to suitable areas where the known arts of life could be practised with success.

With the progress of time, men replaced stone by bones in the manufacture of implements; and bones could be procured beyond the hills wherever there was a forest with game in it to kill. The hunter of former days then learnt the art of sewing and of making tents and clothes. By the time that man chanced upon the use of metals, he had also learnt to cook food in earthen vessels. The control over nature had gradually increased with the invention of new appliances until man succeeded in migrating to new climates and countries where life would have been impossible in an early age.

This is the story of man's progress in Western Europe as revealed by the labours of the archaeologist. The general trend of events observed in Western Europe has been paralleled by developments in other parts of the world. In India, China and America, the Metal Age was preceded by an age of polished stones; and this again by an age when tools were made of roughly



chipped blocks of stone in a comparatively small variety of forms. The progress of the mode of life in Europe was from a collecting and hunting stage through pastoral to an agricultural, and finally to industrial stage of civilization. In all parts of the world all these forms of civilization have been met with, and the Evolutionary School of Anthropologists has drawn from this the conclusion that all cultures have to pass through the same succession of stages on account of an inner working of a natural law.

Parallel to the evolution of culture, another important discovery was made by anthropologists with regard to man's physical evolution. The most ancient skulls, brought to light so far, show an inferior cranial capacity in comparison with modern skulls. Again, the men of the early Stone Age had prominent brow-ridges, a low forehead and no chin to speak of. In these matters, they resembled apes more than any living race of mankind. The increase in the size of the brain and the development of head-form were also taken to indicate a corresponding growth in mental powers which could be transmitted through the germ-plasm.

This fact of an upward trend in man's physical evolution helped to confirm anthropologists in their view that there was a corresponding progressive trend in cultural evolution too. They imagined that there was a specific path which every civilization followed, perhaps in correspondence with the progressive trend in man's physical evolution.

### *The Results of Evolution*

In order to gain a clear idea about the course of human evolution before entering into a discussion of the above questions, let us generalize our observations with regard to the course of human history. If we compare the cultures of the early Stone Age with those of later times, we find that there was, firstly, an increase

in material comforts. This was mainly due to improved technical resources. Man built more efficient tools, and also domesticated cattle in order to shift some of the burden of human labour upon them. Hunting was followed by agriculture, and agriculture by various industries. The productivity of human labour was raised. As a result, man was able to enjoy a higher standard of living for the same expenditure of energy than before.

These technical improvements were attended by another feature in human civilization. The art of agriculture can support more men per square mile of land than hunting. A forest area which can feed a handful of hunters, can support more men if it is turned into agricultural land. The second result of these improvements has, therefore, been that it has brought more and more men to live close to one another. This increase in social density has not merely been a by-product of technical advancement; in some cases it has also been necessitated by the latter. A number of craftsmen who make, say, ploughs and bullock carts, cannot live unless the farmer feeds them at the same time. This requires more intimate social co-operation as a necessary condition of industrial specialization. Similarly, there are certain technical processes as in modern industries, where the processes themselves depend upon specialization and more intimate co-operation between the men involved. Accordingly, the second result of cultural evolution has been that larger and larger social integrations have come into being with progress in technical equipments.

These larger social units have not, however, come into being everywhere. But where they have, smaller social units like the family, the clan or the tribe have fused with one another to form more extensive organizations. Sometimes, the individuality of smaller units has completely disappeared; while, in some cases, a part of it has been preserved in spite of their being

affiliated to larger corporations. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable in the case of the family organization. In European society, for example, tribes have disappeared to form nations. The character of the family unit has undergone modification due to national demands as well as the demands of industrial organization. But its integrity has not been totally lost. In Hindu society, caste nowadays largely functions with regard to the selection of a mate; its task of defining occupation has been substantially reduced. The family has undergone some disintegration, but less than that suffered by the organization in Europe.

Along with the fusion of smaller social groups to form larger ones, there has resulted a progressive fusion of various cultural traits at the same time. Cultural contacts, fusions and defensive reactions of various degrees have accompanied these social integrations of men in the course of human evolution. As the degree of social fusion has increased with technical advancement, the degree of cultural fusion has also shown a corresponding growth in course of time.

But this phenomenon has not been observed everywhere. Where social fusions have actually taken place, they have generally been attended by cultural fusion. But there have been communities who have refused to be drawn under the overwhelming influence of cultural or social floods, and have thus preserved their cultures without changes to which other cultures have been subjected.

A comparison of the history of different cultures reveals the fact that every culture has not necessarily followed the same course of development as a predestined necessity, where by development is meant an increase in technical resources (i.e. an increase in the productivity of human labour), as well as an increase in social and cultural integration. But it is a fact that the more complicated and developed technical, social and cultural equipments of man have followed simpler and undeveloped ones, so far as their appearance in point of

time is concerned. Just as the first mammals came long after the first reptiles, and birds after fishes, so also one type of developed culture has succeeded another in point of time. But it has not always meant that the more developed one has survived and the older has uniformly been swept away from the face of the earth. Just as today, the reptile lives as well as man, the bird lives as well as mammals, each being master within its own special environment, so also, in the world, there exist many cultures, side by side, each confined to the particular set of environmental conditions which the upholders of that culture have chosen for themselves.

### *Formulation of the Problem*

We have seen that evolution has taken place in three directions, namely, progressive invention of technical processes designed to increase the productivity of human labour, growth in the size of social and of cultural integrations. The very fact that men have succeeded in preserving simpler cultures and simpler modes of life by choosing special environments, like the Eskimo or the Pauri Bhuiya of the Orissan hills, is proof that there is no deterministic tendency which drives each culture inevitably along a fixed path of progress. But there can be no doubt that there has been some progress; what then has this been due to?

The Marxian sociologist, Bukharin, is of opinion that natural conditions force this progressive tendency upon man as the only condition of survival.<sup>1</sup> His discussions imply that each technical equipment of man, after some time, exhausts nature's resources. Either nature ceases to yield enough food for the same number of men, or the number of men so rises that the same quantity of food is no longer sufficient for them. In any case, the next step for survival is the invention of some technical resource which further increases human productivity, and

<sup>1</sup> N. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*, pp. 62, 63, 77.

thus wrenches out enough food for the increased number of men from the hitherto unutilized resources of nature.

But the example of tribes like the Eskimo or the Bhuiya has shown us that this is not the only condition of survival. Men have also survived by the restriction of population in accordance with the yield of the environment through available technical means of exploiting it. It does not really matter to nature whether twenty persons live on a square mile of land or two hundred ; whether the amoeba or a highly developed human being occupies a particular square foot of land on the face of the earth. Bukharin presumes that technical evolution will always make it possible for more men to live on the same piece of land. But why should this be so? Whose business is it to see that more men live where few men lived formerly? The course of history does not prove that there is any director who necessarily directs things that way ; and evolution may bring progress or retrogression with equal aptitude. Only one thing is constant, and that is, that things change. They do not remain constant.

### *Comradeship*

But the fact cannot be denied that there has been some sort of progress in human evolution in course of time. Although there is no determinism, there should be then some other factor which has been responsible for the observed phenomenon.

We have seen that the formula of the *survival of the fittest* need not necessarily carry human society only in one particular direction. Men may as well survive by the restriction of numbers in accordance with depleted resources. The fact that men have often rejected this method and chosen the former course seems to have been due to another factor in human evolution, namely, man's love for suffering humanity.

Whenever a particular technical equipment has failed



man through the depletion of nature's productiveness or the increase of population, suffering has been brought upon the existing population in the shape of famine and disease. If nature had been left free to take its own way, some men would have died until the balance was once more restored. But, under these circumstances, some individuals have actually been moved by human love, and instead of allowing a large number of their companions to be weeded out, they have tried to restore the former standard of living to everybody by new technical improvements. (They may also fail to do so, as in the case of the Eskimo.) It is thus that the existing progress of human society has come into being. This love or concern about human suffering then is as much a factor in human progress as nature's selectiveness and the struggle for existence.<sup>2</sup>

### *Accidental Discoveries*

The actual technical history of mankind shows that inventions have not always been made just when they were necessary; nor were they made with a full realization of their potential utility. The man who first invented the wheel never dreamt of all the uses to which it would be put. It was the same with the invention of fire, paper, glass and the like. Inventions are made in large numbers, while only a few of them are fully utilized. We must, therefore, look upon many inventions as accidents in the cultural evolution of mankind. If particular inventions had not been already made, specific cultures would have followed a course different from what they actually did.

### *Determinism*

There are some religious writers who say that humanity has been following the path of progress through some

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Franz Boas, *Anthropology and Modern Life*, 1929, p. 93 ff.

divine dispensation. Bukharin's formula of survival or the Marxist apotheosis of History does not also explain everything, personal accidents of mental attitude as well as accidental technical inventions being also involved in the process. What religious men say is that even these personal and technical accidents come into being on account of an inner dispensation. This is a thing which can neither be proved nor disproved; it lies beyond the scope of the scientist.

There are others again who believe that a racial factor is involved in the operation. Tribes like the Bhuiya or the Eskimo are, according to them, racially backward. Those endowed with 'superior' racial qualities have chosen the line of increasing human productivity, and have thus brought about the observed development in human evolution. Authors like Madison Grant, Lothrop Stoddard, have claimed racial superiority on behalf of the Nordic race; and they have held that all progress has been due to this particular race of mankind. But Kroeber and Boas have conclusively shown that the 'racial' element involved in human progress have been negligible.<sup>3</sup> Kroeber ultimately has come to the conclusion that culture may be independent of race, possibly is wholly so.

The 'racial, i.e. physiological explanation of human progress thus fails as much as does the Theory of Struggle and Survival to explain the actual course of human evolution.

### *Factors in Evolution*

We thus find that the causes of cultural evolution must be sought in nature's repeated depletions, man's concern for man whereby he wishes others not to die and suffer but to live happily, the accidental discovery of

<sup>3</sup> Kroeber, A. L., *Anthropology*, 1923, p. 504, also 180 ff. Boas, F., *The Mind of Primitive Man*, 1923, p. 114 ff. and *Anthropology and Modern Life*, 1929, pp. 39, 79-80.

technical resources, the accidental advent of men who fully utilize some of these resources, and lastly the accident of the determination in large masses of man to follow their leaders to victory in the conquest of happiness. The last one may be due to inborn racial character or cultural tradition; it may be due to the accident of a people not having been laid completely low by adverse circumstances at the crucial moment.

Some of these factors of cultural evolution may perhaps be reducible to other factors. But as it is not always possible to do so, we shall regard cultural evolution as having been due to many factors working together; some of which are human, some natural or environmental, and some accidental.

#### SUMMARY

In the course of evolution, cultures have grown more and more complex. The severity of the struggle for existence has been mitigated through the accumulation of cultural traits. Each culture has followed, more or less closely, this line of evolution. But there is no scientific evidence to prove the existence of any deterministic tendency in culture to follow particular lines of evolution.

## CHAPTER VII

### ETHICAL PROGRESS

WE HAVE ALREADY seen that there has been some development in the course of cultural evolution, this development having followed a particular course, namely, an increase in the productivity of human labour. This has raised the material standard of life, or added more leisure to human life.

Bukharin argues that as mind is entirely a function of matter, material progress necessarily denotes a corresponding mental superiority.<sup>1</sup> He also holds that the Science, Philosophy and Art accompanying a highly developed material culture is necessarily superior to those accompanying one of poorer material content.

This assumption has got to be carefully examined. Where does the superiority lie, if there is actually any? By what standard should we compare two civilizations? Philosophers have never agreed about any common standard of values; so we shall straightway choose that which appeals to us personally as the best one for comparative purposes. That standard is the standard of human love. It goes without saying that there is suffering in human life, and a philosophy or a particular material or social organization which alleviates suffering of mankind, may be taken as superior to another which is less effective in the same direction. As a corollary to this, it might also be argued that a philosophy which looks upon all human beings as one, is superior to another which confines its sympathy to a particular group of human beings, whether that group consists of a family, a tribe, a nation or a class.

We have already said that the observed amount of progress in man's material culture has partly been due

<sup>1</sup> N. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism*, p. 55 and ch. VI.

to the spirit of human love. But that does not mean that human love always expresses itself only through the material enrichment of life. It may take other forms as well. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, believed that material enrichment, or sensual satisfaction as he puts it, does go some way in creating the condition of human happiness. But the pleasure that men derive from it is not of the highest type, it is variable in character and is ultimately rooted in the interests of self. Gandhi believed that there is another type of happiness which results from the realization of the brotherhood of man, and from the ordering of one's personal life in accordance with the interest of the whole human family. Such exercise of human love which springs from a sense of human unity gives a more lasting type of happiness than the mere satisfaction of hunger and sex can ever bring about. But such happiness never comes to a man who is suffering from poverty, disease or overwork. So the material conditions under which men live must be so developed that men may have the leisure and mood to exercise their love for mankind, and ultimately gather the conviction from their own experience that humanity is, after all, one.

In contrast with this point of view, Bukharin believes that it is material conditions alone which matter most. They create an abundance of leisure, and love and all the higher sentiments of man follow a progressive abundance of leisure as a necessary corollary. The mind of man is completely dependent upon material conditions for its basic philosophy. Only when the economic arrangement of the world is such that all the members of humanity participate in one common plan of production, and thus become dependent upon one another, all over the world, for their prosperity, can the philosophy of human unity or of human brotherhood be actually experienced by men on earth. As long as economic co-operation does not tie all nations



or peoples into one interdependent whole, so long will men continue to think in terms of classes or of smaller and smaller sectional interests.

At bottom both Gandhi and the School of Historical Materialism agree in this that suffering has got to be overcome, and men made happy. But the method of the achievement of that ideal is different for the two schools of thought. One of them believes in initially building up a broader philosophy of life, and working it out through constructive work and a non-violent way of struggle, while the other tries to create the material conditions first through telescoping class struggle within a shorter and shorter span of time, believing that the rest will follow as an inevitable consequence.

### *Dependence of Thought upon Material Condition*

If we ask ourselves just how far mind is conditioned by matter, we find it difficult to give a ready and completely satisfactory answer. The mind of *some men* does not seem to be conditioned by prevailing economic circumstances at all. When Jesus was born, conditions were very far from tying together many human races into one economic whole. We are far from that position even now; but two thousand years ago, Jesus dared to think in terms of the brotherhood of man, and live up to that ideal. Of course, he had to lay down his life for it, for there was no room for such love in the midst of the smaller selfishnesses which prevailed all around him. This has perhaps been the fate of all great men in the world, whether they were teachers and philosophers like Jesus or Buddha or Socrates, or artists and men of science. The price of the freedom of thought has always been heavy; but where people have not shrunk from paying that price, the material conditions of life have not succeeded in conditioning their sympathies or in narrowing down their philosophical ideals.

Bukharin may not admit this, but Professor Hecker in his *Moscow Dialogues* (p. 229) admits of the possibility of such freedom, although he says that such men have no right to think in terms of humanism when men all around them are waging war between class and class. According to the latter, men who take refuge in a higher philosophy, escape from the duty which reality forces upon them, and are thus really traitors to the cause of freedom of the working classes. Whether the only way to bring about a sense of human unity is through material channels remains to be seen. But this proves the partial independence of the human spirit from material conditions, so long as it is gained by the abandonment of personal hopes of safety and of pleasure.

### *The Conclusion*

The comparison of Materialism and Idealism thus brings us to the conclusion that material conditions and human love are not necessarily interdependent. This means that a materially rich civilization does not necessarily reflect a larger measure of human sympathy than does a poor one. From that point of view, we may very well cast doubts upon the claim of many that progress in technical equipments has necessarily been accompanied by ethical progress.

If freedom of human thought, not love, is held to be the most precious thing, even then there seems to be no proof that this freedom has invariably increased with technical progress in the world. There were men in the ancient world with its poorer material culture who could rise above personal biases and attain an extraordinarily wide and sweeping vision of the universe. There are men among scientists and poets even now who have followed the same course. But the number of such free souls does not seem to have any appreciable relation with the density of population or

the amount of leisure available through technical progress. They are as rare now as they formerly were.

Thus from the point of view of human love or of freedom of thought, there seems to be little to choose between cultures of high material content and low. We cannot claim with any degree of assurance that one is better than the other. We can, therefore, hardly claim that the observed progress in man's technical abilities has been consistently accompanied by progress in ethical matters. The most that can be said is that since there has been an increase in the size of the brain from Pleistocene to modern times, there is a likelihood that mankind has also progressed in mental, and along with it, the ethical direction. But so far as the evidence of the historical period is concerned, there does not seem to have been any demonstrable improvement in ethical matters.

This may be looked upon as a confession of ignorance or a surrender to pessimism; but it would be an evil day if scientific men allowed a particular faith to force them into a positive conclusion when the evidence does not warrant it. There is, indeed, no justification for the belief that a divinity like Race, Matter, History or God will inevitably lead humanity towards perfection. Nature and past historical conditions offer the stage on which man has to work. They also set certain limitations. But ultimately the responsibility lies with man himself: As he sows, so he reaps.

#### SUMMARY

Increase in cultural complexity does not, necessarily, prove the ethical superiority of modern cultures to cultures of former times. The tests of ethical progress which have been put forward so far, are rather unsatisfactory and we cannot say from their application that cultural evolution has necessarily been attended by ethical progress.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### ART AND RELIGION<sup>1</sup>

THERE ARE MOMENTS in life when the world seems to be too much with us, and its daily cares appear to be petty and mean, unrelieved by even the faintest glow of beauty or greatness. The dreary prospect of experiencing such things all through the rest of our lives seems to be unbearable, like the prospect of crossing a treeless desert for no purpose at all. At such moments life loses its meaning, the spirit is engulfed in darkness and we do not know how ever that gloom shall be lifted and the meaning of life once more restored to us.

This unhappily is the lot of all human beings. At one time or another in the life of each person, he is faced by some such situation; and it is precisely the path which he chooses at that moment, and the philosophy which then grows out of the turmoils of his soul, which shall matter most for the rest of his life.

The story of what some men do under the circumstances is simply told. Unfortunately for them, and for their fellow beings too, they allow the darkness of life to envelop their souls, and their attention to be captured by its uglier aspects. Such men, by their own behaviour, then give back to the world the gloom from which they themselves have suffered. They imagine themselves to be standing outside of the world, the world is their enemy and they pay it back in its own coin; such men only serve to deepen the gloom which encircles human life on all sides.

But many of these persons still preserve a memory of the joyous things which they have once experienced; and while conceding to the vileness of life in ordinary moments, they still preserve private moments which are given to the enjoyment of love and beauty. Life is thus rendered a mixture of both good and evil, the good being rare, momentary and private, offering to the injured soul a sort of a haven in the midst of its sufferings.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *The Teachers' Journal*, vol. VIII, No. 10 & 11, October-November 1929.



This is the class to which the majority of mankind belongs. They are men who recognize good and evil to be separate principles which are antagonistic to one another ; men who know their lives to be made up of both of them and as such inconsistent, and let it remain at that ; for neither have they the power to render all things good, nor do they know of any means of escaping from their present intellectual position. The most unfortunate thing about such lives is that such men are never at peace with themselves ; their own lives — not the events of the world — seem to be beyond control and they never know the joy which comes from a life over which one has complete mastery. From the objective point of view, too, such lives have an inherent point of weakness, in so far as they are unreliable in moments of crisis. One never knows how such men shall behave in critical situations ; they may shine forth in the greatest acts of heroism, or, as is equally probable, they may give themselves up to the most abject forms of mental defeat.

Art and Religion, in which we conceive of God as an embodiment of goodness, are the products of the brighter moments of such inconsistent lives. An artist gives expression to the beautiful thoughts which are present in the lives of the people among whom he lives. In such common lives, the beautiful things are often submerged underneath a mass of commonplace and tiresome details or their expression is injured by the greatest of human weaknesses, namely, the hesitancy to give effect to the Beautiful in our lives, which is the same as the fear of serving God lest we appear to be too different from our fellowmen. A true artist is heroic in spirit ; he rises above these common failings and rescues the Beautiful from its commonplace associations. By thus giving permanence to it, he not only proclaims the victory of the Beautiful over that which is otherwise, but he also spreads a sweetness and joy in other lives which may be enveloped in gloom. An artist and his creations are thus not only the flower and ornament of an age or civilization, but like flowers they also hold the promise of the future in their bosom.

The idea of God like a beautiful artistic creation firstly offers relief to man in the midst of life's darknesses. Religious exercise consists in a reorganization of our senti-

ments, beliefs and habits with reference to the mental image of God to which we possess certain sentimental attachments. Such exercise not only renders painless the inevitable trials and sufferings of human existence, but also helps us to maintain a good life by fixing our attention upon an object which in itself is beautiful.

The idea of God is thus one of man's most artistic creations. While Art has certain limitations as regards its appeal, this idea does not suffer from any such limitation. Its greatness lies in its infinite capacity of serving the needs of the person who professes it. Nothing can be more beautiful and tender than the prospect of some frail human being imagining God in a personal capacity, loving him, revering him, talking to him and worshipping him or entering into various kinds of relationship which are possible with a human being. Such an adaptation immediately embodies a recognition of human weakness, and the idea of God loses in none of its dignity or greatness by being thus made to serve personal needs.

← An artist and a man of religion are thus both great and heroic in spirit. They recognize life as it is ; but instead of surrendering their spirits, or allowing themselves to be overwhelmed, they rise above life's pettinesses and find in their very presence the greatest reason for not repeating them, but of shedding forth light, love, beauty and goodness in order to relieve the gloom, if may be. Such great souls, who are not conquered, but who conquer the gloom instead, are indeed the most heroic souls that we know of, and they are truly the spirits that give us a reason to live, even if it be only to enjoy their company.

But far above and beyond this life, it is possible to imagine another kind of life in which what we distinguish as good and evil are not recognized as such, but are imagined as the complementary faces of an Absolute Entity. Life loses its attractions, death its terrors and the Beautiful and that which is not so, both appear to be parts of an enormous rhythm of which human life appears to be only one particular and momentary phase.

If such an idea really grows out of our life, if its *sadhana* appears to be inevitable, then it is possible to imagine that such *sadhana* would deliver us into a state of intellectual and emotional freedom, of whose possibilities I consider

myself far from being capable of comprehending at the present moment. That state of freedom only appears in my imagination to be like the prospect of a mountain-top ever covered by snow, or better still, like the blue sky above the peaks of the mountains, through which the birds soar, while the idea of a good and beautiful God is like the deep green and fragrant woods which reach half-way up the hill-side, offering rest and shade to the weary traveller as he wends his way up its dark slopes.

## APPENDIX II

### TRAINING IN THE FIELD SCIENCES<sup>1</sup>

AMONG FIELD SCIENCES we generally count the following: Anthropology, Botany, Geography, Geology and Zoology, as well as Archaeology. There is much in each of these which can be learnt in the museum and the laboratory, but a large part of the student's experience has to be built up by personal observation and training in the field.

The arrangements for study in our Universities, which have gradually evolved through decades, is very well fitted for such sciences as Physics or Chemistry, but not so much for the field sciences. Teachers of the latter group have, therefore, to supplement the work in the class-room by what are called excursions, in which students are taken out for very short periods and shown round certain things in the field. From experience, it might be stated that they do not serve to give the student anything more than a nodding acquaintance with the objects of his study. The result is that even when the student succeeds in securing a first-class degree on the strength of his class-room and laboratory work, he does not develop self-confidence enough to be able to plan fresh observations in the field in connection with specific problems which might confront him.

This is a state of affairs which must be corrected, and the present paper is meant to suggest some means which may prove useful for this purpose.

The first difficulty which one notices is that winter is the time when field investigation can be carried out well, and this is also the time which is crowded with work in the colleges. Administrators of colleges and Universities have a habit of looking upon field-work as a sort of holiday, and, therefore, wish teachers to undertake excursions during periods of vacation. Among vacations, summer is useless for field-work, while the Poojas occur at a time when rains

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *Science and Culture*, March 1949, being summary of speech at the discussion meeting on 'Training in India for Professional Careers in the Field Sciences' at the Indian Science Congress held at Allahabad on January 4, 1949.

do not always cease, and the ground is often too wet and kutchra roads not in a fit condition for easy movement. In many areas, it is also the season for malaria. The suggestion is that two or three months' spent during winter in company with teachers, away from colleges in the field, should be treated as equivalent to class-work. Teachers may so organize their teaching that special branches of study, which have a closer bearing upon observation in the field can be taught on an intensive scale during lecture periods in the midst of the objects themselves.

In post-graduate classes, there should be less of vacation, and part of the summer months may be spent in the laboratory instead of being wasted, as much of it often is, under present arrangements. Vacations are now just blank and meaningless periods of unplanned work, or no work at all, intervening between periods of work, when work itself is not so hard.

The second suggestion is that students should do both team work and individual work in the field. Thus, if a student of Geography is being taught the art of surveying in the field, a number of them should carry on the work jointly. Each must learn how to hold the staff, how to use the chain, the theodolite or the level and take his turn at different instruments one after another. But besides this joint endeavour, each single student should also be allotted a small plot of rough ground, of which he should prepare the map completely by his unaided effort. This work will naturally not bear the same quality as joint effort will, with the help of specialized apparatus. But by trying to map a region by counting steps and with the help of such simple, portable apparatus as a prismatic compass or a box-sextant, the student will learn the art of rapid survey, and thus develop self-confidence in a way unattainable by any other means. The analogy can naturally be extended to other sciences, in each of which a wise balance should be struck between team work and personal work.

The third suggestion is that the results of field investigation, thus carried out under wise planning and direction, should be given adequate recognition, while the merit of the student is being evaluated finally for degree purposes. In some of the field sciences, such a practice is current even today; but the value attached to field records is



generally of an inferior order. It has got to be raised, so that the student may also warm up in his field investigation.

The fourth suggestion is designed to increase the feeling of inter-dependence between different sciences. In such a subject as Human Geography, for example, where we enquire into the question of the interrelation between nature and man's civilization, we immediately find that the aid of co-workers who have specialized in Soil-science or Meteorology, in Botany and Zoology, and also in Economics, becomes indispensable. A human geographer, instead of playing the part of an amateur botanist and zoologist in addition to his special enquiries, would do well to seek the co-operation of specialists in those departments in course of his own study. In other words, this would mean that when field investigation is being planned, it would be best if it is planned in such a manner that different departments of the University can participate in a joint investigation. While working in this manner, they will naturally conduct investigations independently; but when they meet every evening at the end of the day's work, let them try and help one another in interrelated problems. If this becomes organizationally possible, the investigation of separate sciences will often develop a purposiveness which will be of considerable academic advantage.

The fifth suggestion is with regard to leadership in research and investigation. In all scientific research, there is always an element of play and of adventure, the desire to battle against difficulties, to break the barriers of darkness and bring a ray of light into unknown or little-known regions. Without that, scientific investigation loses its soul. But beyond this purely subjective element in research, there is also another which often sustains the worker in his difficult days and which, at the same time, gives a moral tone to his work in the field or the laboratory. This is the feeling of social responsibility. It is not that every problem chosen for investigation should have a practical bias or else become taboo. But the thing is that the worker should also bear the feeling that in his search for Truth, he is not functioning as an investigator merely taking delight in personal intellectual satisfaction, and that at public expense, but that he is also doing something which is great. And the feeling of greatness comes

when one is inwardly assured that the world needs an answer to the problems against which one is struggling in one's own field. For the majority of workers, such a feeling is necessary as a load to give a poise to their scientific investigation. Otherwise, their work tends to fritter down into an aimless endeavour, which merely satisfies some idle curiosity, or even a sense of personal vanity. A social sense, rightly introduced, helps to keep the balance much better than anything else can.

But there is another class of workers among whom the sheer adventure of scientific investigation supplies the necessary moral drive for action. Such students are rare; and, where they are present, the teacher need not worry himself about preventing their research from running to waste. They should be given the 'liberty to play'; and the teacher can rest assured that if the student is of the right type, his scientific integrity will create in him the mental discipline necessary for its own fulfilment. The teacher can only become the helpmate of such a student, a friend and guide, not a director. But, for the rest, who are more numerous, it is better to ballast them with a sense of social responsibility, with a demand for 'usefulness'.

There is another matter which should be pointed out in connection with the question of leadership in scientific investigation, whether in the field or in the laboratory. Unless the teacher himself feels inspired in his own work of science, he cannot infect others with enthusiasm. Unless one is on fire oneself, one cannot set others on fire.

The reason why some teachers fail in this respect lies occasionally in directions other than academic. The world we live in is dominated by money values. Not that other values do not exist or have ceased to function in human life, but money does play an inordinately large part in determining social status in the world of today. A man who is well paid feels more satisfied than a less paid man, even when the income of both is above what they need for the satisfaction of needs. Recognition in the Universities unfortunately often comes in the shape of added incomes. A good teacher in a University is often encouraged by its administrators by being placed in a grade carrying salaries higher than the last one.

This results in setting up a damaging cycle of move-

ments. A worthy man placed in one of the lower grades loses much of the joy in his work, particularly when he finds people being placed above him, not on the score of merit, but for extra-academic reasons. Of course, there is no justification for keeping any single worker on the border of want. But we are just now referring to scales, both of which keep one above the level of want, and in which people are shifted from one to the other for purposes of encouragement.

This is a feature of the working of our institutions which should best be done away with. A common scale of salaries ought to be the rule for all. And when encouragement is needed as an incentive, this should come in the form of academic honours and not in terms of added purses. A very desirable way in which the administration can show its appreciation of the worth of a scientist would be to give him more freedom from routine work, and also a greater measure of opportunity for scientific investigation. Scientists will appreciate that much more than a mere addition to their personal inheritable wealth. A great worker can be very well given the opportunity to retire early on a pension from compulsory teaching work, and kept wholly free for working in his own way by grants exclusively meant for research.

It is difficult to say how far equalization of income, as suggested above, will serve its purpose, when the rest of our lives, outside the University, is dominated by 'capitalistic' values. Perhaps the weeds will choke the useful plant out of existence, unless conditions are also changed outside the walls of the University. But if the scientist is worth his salt, if he is true to his profession, he can keep the torch lighted even when the wind is blowing hostile outside. For it is only when such men become more and more numerous, both in the field as well as in the laboratory, that science will come to its rightful place in human life.

The end of the old order must be laid in the souls of men; and when the fire burns brightly in more places than one, it will succeed in reducing to ashes that which chokes its breath today, and thus make room for that which alone can make human life better and happier in the end.

### APPENDIX III

#### THE INTERVIEW IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

THE ORTHODOX METHOD in which a human geographer works is this. He first of all collects information regarding the relief, rainfall, plant and animal life of the region which forms the subject of his enquiry. Then he reads reports by travellers and anthropologists, economists and historians about the life of the people in that region, and lastly he carries on some observation personally in the field. His main task now consists in trying to find a relation between the two sets of facts, namely, the physical and the social phenomena, which have been thus gathered in the library and the field.

Although this is the orthodox way, yet it has been found to have certain shortcomings. The geographer is often tempted to read theory into his facts. His preconceived notions regarding the relation which should subsist between Environment and Man often leads him unconsciously to a selection of facts favourable to views already held; and he is often led to underestimate the worth of some other facts which might also have had their share in shaping the life of the people whom he studies. Moreover, as the two parts of the enquiry are often kept separate from one another, and Environment and Society are observed independently, the people among whom he works, do not really share in his problems; they do not get the opportunity of saying many things which they might otherwise have said; and it is not improbable that the geographer is likely to miss a few points which he might otherwise have gained.

Here is a suggestion, therefore, about the method of interview which the writer has found useful in course of his own work, and which students may likewise find to be of some help.

After reaching the field of enquiry, the geographer should get interested in the life of the people, and this interest must be not merely academic but also genuinely human. When we sit together with a peasant at the end

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *Calcutta Geographical Review*, March 1949.

of his day's work, we can make him talk about his own difficulties in life, if we are ourselves really interested in the latter. We can ask him how he has been hit by the fluctuations in the market price of his produce, what he is going to do about it, if there is any prospect of introducing new crops so that he can either earn more, or become more and more self-sufficient. These are simple questions, and the geographer will perhaps not be able to gather much material for his own thoughts from the peasant's replies. But gradually, as intimacy ripens, the geographer will be able to go down deeper. He asks his friend about the nature of the soil, what crops grow well and which do not, and if he can suggest any reason for this. Perhaps the peasant will say many unscientific things, but it is also not improbable that the discussion will open up new lines of thought which may lead the geographer to new fields of enquiry.

From an account of the soil and its capabilities, from the story of the farmer's experience of plants which it will take and others which would not grow well in his fields, the subject can then be switched on to neighbouring regions, to the markets which exist near by, as well as to the castes and tribes who live in the country around and carry on special arts and industries with which the farmer comes in contact in the weekly markets. Thus, supposing the peasant says that last year he purchased his plough and the wheels for his bullock-cart in the fair at —, the geographer can ask him where those articles ultimately come from and why. Personally, while asking such a question, the author was told in a district in West Bengal that the wood for this purpose came from a tree which grew in abundance in the drier portions of the neighbouring district. At once, this led to the next question: if that region is drier, then is there any difference in the crops grown there? The peasant was pleased with the question, for he had an opportunity of showing off his knowledge, and said that the lower, flooded portions of the district grew one kind of coarse, quick-growing rice, while the drier and higher parts grew a finer variety with better flavour, but which took a longer time to mature. It also fetched higher prices, although the yield was less. Incidentally, he gave the information that, on account of un-



controlled floods, some portions of the district had been either covered by sand deposits or lay so long under water every year that it was only used as pasture land in the dry season. Further enquiry revealed that during the rainy months of the year, the cattle were all cooped up on comparatively high ground attached to homestead lands, and owners had, now and then, to move about in boats cutting a special kind of grass which grew in the flooded fields for their cattle to eat.

Thus, the peasant lays bare his experiences about nature little by little, and the geographer can gather ample material for his own purpose from the interview, such as is not readily obtainable from official reports drawn up for special purposes.

The peasant can also tell his new friend, who displays such a real interest in his life, how the cotton cloth of — market is cheap, and how, many years ago, he purchased a big brass jar at the fair of —. Then he will probably add that the market at — used to be big and crowded at one time, but it has shrunk up of late, the traders having departed, the big houses and godowns having fallen into disrepair; while he now makes his purchases at the new market which has gradually grown up to a respectable size, even within the last few years, near the railway station of —. Perhaps he may add with a sigh that brass articles today do not last as long as they used to do formerly, the material having become lighter, although, as it is cheaper, many more people are able to buy brass articles now than before. The peasant will also perhaps have a hard word to say against his son and grandson, who frequent the 'talkie' which has been set up in a tent near the railway station. The younger generation wastes hard-earned money every week, while, in his own day, village shows and open-air performances were all that cheered him during the autumn months when harvest had been gathered in and there were plenty of annas in a man's purse.

In course of recounting the tale of his younger days, the peasant will have furnished the geographer with ample material suggestive of the changes in the location of market towns, their change from a seasonal to a permanent character, the influence of the growth of roads and

railways on the countryside, and so on. Not that all of it will be grist for his mill, but certainly, very many helpful suggestions may be thrown up in course of these simple tales of the joys and sorrows of the people among whom he works.

After such an interview, which may last for a week or more, and which need not be confined to a single individual, but may be carried on in the company of several villagers as they sit together for their evening smoke, the geographer should lay down on a large sketch map, the materials that he has so far gathered. It is *then* that he should bring into operation all the information with which he came equipped from the library and the museum, before he left for the field. And if he now tries to correlate the physical data with the human, he will experience with a sense of joy how the tales gathered in course of the days spent with the peasant or the trader, will lighten up many a corner which would otherwise have remained obscure.

## APPENDIX IV

### NOTES ON PLANNING FIELD INVESTIGATION<sup>1</sup>

1. FIELD WORK consists of three parts which are independent but which must be co-ordinated in order to produce the best results. These are:

- (i) The selection of personnel; the arrangements for travel and transport; the daily routine of work and rest; the arrangements for food; and standardization of the methods of note-taking, recording, etc. This constitutes the *mechanical* aspect of field-work.
- (ii) The previous preparation and general formulation of the *problem*.
- (iii) Planning the *enquiry* in relation to the problem formulated.

It is with the last part of field-work that some suggestions are being given in the present paper, in the hope that they might prove to be of some use to workers in the field.

2. I once knew a village blacksmith in Orissa who was looked upon by many as a genius in the repair of all complicated machinery. This man had a peculiar knack of designing his tools or implements. Whenever he had a difficult task on hand, he used to spend some time in thinking over what he was going to do; and then the first thing which he did was to prepare a special tool with which he proceeded to repair the machine in question. For each special work, he thus designed a new tool, which was discarded after use.

It is even so with field investigation. There can be no general method in which all possible evidence can be gathered for the future solution of all possible problems. A traveller may, of course, gather a large assortment of materials which may, in future, be of service to various classes of scientific men. But planned field investigation is different from a traveller's observation; it is comparable to experimental observation in a laboratory rather than

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *Calcutta Geographical Review*, September 1950.

to the varied observations of a naturalist, classical examples of which have been handed down to us by men like Darwin, Wallace, Livingstone and Humboldt.

It is specialized field enquiry with which we are concerned at the present moment, and what should be emphasized at the very outset is that, like a special tool for a special job, the line of enquiry should also be designed in conformity with the particular problem which the investigator has set for himself.

Let us illustrate this with reference to two problems which a human geographer is often called upon to answer.

3.1. The prime problem with which a human geographer is concerned is the relation which subsists between environment and man's cultural life, his crystallized behaviour in contrast to the unstandardized individual responses which a human being may display in nature. Among man's standardized forms of behaviour, the economic and social arrangements constitute a large part; and these are built up in order to satisfy his primary biological needs.

Such arrangements, or the institutions and mechanical devices which result therefrom, are largely dependent upon the natural resources of a place; and a geographer always tries to find out how far the life of a particular people, in these respects, has been shaped by the possibilities and limitations set by natural, geographical resources.

3.2.\* Let us, for the sake of facility of discussion, imagine that we are in the Santal Parganas, in a village within easy reach of a small town like Jasidih or Deoghar.

The first thing which the geographer observes is the principal occupations of the people and the mechanical and social apparatuses which have resulted from their particular use of this part of the earth's surface which the villagers inhabit. Some of the men may be farmers, some milkmen, some potters, blacksmiths, labourers or traders; some may be mainly occupied in gathering wild leaves from the forest and in selling them to wholesale dealers for export to distant towns.

Naturally, the first reaction of the geographer will be to justify all that he sees. He will be tempted to say that because the wild leaves are there on the hills, therefore

people gather or sell them; because there is good earth in another place, therefore potters manufacture special types of earthenware in those places. But this simple type of explanation is often found to be superficial when we try to enter more deeply into the why and wherefore of our problems.

Why is it, we may ask ourselves, that the export of wild leaves by railway train has specially increased in course of the last thirty years, and why was there not much of this trade before the advent of railways, although leaves still clothed the hills, often more abundantly than now?

This only means that no problem is as simple as it appears at first sight; and, therefore, in order to find out the full relation between the inhabitants of this region and their environment, we must plan a field investigation extending over a reasonable period of time and during various seasons of the year.

One part of this enquiry is concerned with Space, the other with Time.

3.3. For the sake of the former, the first thing we do is to observe closely the weekly fairs and daily bazaars. Constituted as rural India is even today, we find that special occupations are associated with special castes, and there are villages which are exclusively inhabited by members of particular tribes or castes. In the markets, we may find that particular villages specialize in certain occupations. The inhabitants of one village may be all farmers, while that of another may be principally milkmen, those of a third largely dependent on orchards, which they tend and whose produce they sell in the neighbouring market.

3.4. From the bazaar or weekly fair, we gradually gather a composite picture of men's activities over the entire surrounding region. We also realize that although one caste or one village may specialize in a particular occupation, it would be wrong to imagine that that particular village or the caste or tribe in question can be studied in isolation, i.e. their relation to the natural environment described without reference to the larger socio-economic structure of which they form one small component. We must always remember that no one, not even a region, can live in isolation; every activity is part of a larger whole. Everywhere, it is by corporate exploitation that the natural resources



of a whole area are rendered usable, and then exchanged in bazaars in order to satisfy the needs of the entire inhabitants of the country.

3.5. So, what we do in the field, is to study the bazaars and then proceed to the habitations of those castes or tribes who come from various parts of the country, see what they do in their own homes, try to find out why a particular caste or village specializes in the production of special goods, how a market-village or town focuses and sometimes stimulates the activity of these fractional exploiters, and how goods are exchanged and then distributed for the use of the entire country.

Such investigation may thus unfold the story of how the 'environment' may be partly formed of an intangible set of traditions, habits and desires, while the tangible ones may consist of the presence of population centres, or of social products like a railway or a road, with all its necessary adjuncts.

4.1. The above enquiry is in respect of the spatial relation of communities. Then there is another concerned with time.

It is not true that the activities of the inhabitants of any region remain the same for any great length of time. Populations may change, human needs may vary, while the natural resources of a place may either increase or decrease in quantity.

4.2. The field enquiry designed to elicit evidence in respect of the problem of historical change will be of a different kind than that necessary for finding out space relations. Let us suppose, we devote ourselves to an enquiry about the town of Jasidih and the surrounding region.

The first thing which should be done is to prepare a sketch map of the town, in which the various quarters are properly named. We then observe the activities which are localized in each of these parts of the town. Some parts may have multiple functions and some single ones. We should then break up the whole town, as far as possible, into the smallest functional units.

In this manner, we may discover how one part of the town is the seat of local administration, or of trade and manufactures, another may be a residential area where

sojourners come seasonally for recreation, while a third may be inhabited permanently by poorer working people.

Our work thus will be to study the anatomy and functional physiology of different parts of the town.

4.3. After having done that, we should try to find out the value of land in each quarter of the town. That would give us an indication, in terms of prices or demand, of the relative importance of various sections of the town.

4.4. We are then to interview old people who remember former land prices, or we may look up the registered deeds of sale and transfer of land in the Registration Office, and the record of taxes levied by the Municipality or Union Board at different times. With the help of such evidence, it would be possible to build up the story of how the town has grown in course of time, how it has developed new functions, shed old ones; and this will help us to piece together the story of the historical forces to which the country has been subjected.

5.1. The student will thus realize how an investigation for relations in space and in time, lead one to separate types of activity in the field.

We shall now illustrate how another problem in human geography may necessitate an altogether different form of investigation.

We all know that the relation of nature to man is a complicated one, in which habits and traditions also play a significant role.

When a member of some tribe accustomed to living by hunting and collecting, and a farmer from the plains, or an industrialist from the metropolis reach a small valley within the hills, they do not all view the landscape in the same manner; their reaction may be strikingly different from one another. The hunter will keep his ears and eyes open for possible game, the farmer for any piece of land which might be turned to good account, while the industrialist will probably think of the minerals which may occur here or the possibility of developing the place as an industrial centre. If there is a fast perennial stream, the farmer will try to find out if it will serve him for watering his fields, while the city man will try to figure out how much electricity might be obtained by harnessing it and where that power might be sold for profit.

5.2. When we go to any particular place in our capacity as a human geographer, we may, therefore, naturally ask ourselves how far the observed mode of life has been conditioned by past history and resultant habits of the inhabitants of this region.

When we ask ourselves this question, the line of investigation chalked out would be different from that adopted under Sections 3 and 4.

The first thing we do in relation to the present problem is to conduct fully an enquiry as under Section 3. After having done that, we have to pursue an altogether new line of investigation.

Let us suppose, the people in question belong to the Juang tribe. If we have studied their place in the social economy of Dhenkanal in Orissa, then our enquiry should lead us to other regions where the Juangs are also reported to live. We should proceed to the tops of hills or the plains lower down, to villages where the Juangs live alone, and to those where they live side by side with others; to areas which are distant from trading centres, where a self-sufficient economy is practised and to those where they have been linked up in economic fraternity with others. And after having studied the Juang settlements all over the country as under Section 3, we shall find ourselves in a position to discover the common denominator of Juang culture, from which it would not be difficult to measure how far this culture has been shaped in relation to the natural resources of the region.

6. Field investigation should be purposive, if it is to prove fruitful and economical at the same time. There is one point, however, which should always be borne in mind, and which, in fact, cannot be over-emphasized.

It is one thing to engage in field-work with a formulated problem in mind, and quite another to have also an approximate answer to the problem in mind. If a student spends considerable time in framing a problem and a conjectural answer to it as part of his preparation previous to actual work in the field, the likelihood is that he will try to find a corroboration for his hypothesis in the formulation of which he must have spent arduous days. Every human being loves his own intelligence and an affront to the pro-

duct of that intelligence may be naturally taken as a personal insult.

There are, of course, scientists who can maintain a truly scientific attitude in respect of their problem within the laboratory; but when they are out of it, immersed in the common problems of their daily relations with men, that attitude is held in abeyance and the ordinary emotional biases which assail untrained minds, assail them equally. When the laboratory of the human geographer has none of the exactness or manipulative possibility of a physical laboratory, where the subjects are as he himself is, how much more caution should we not exercise in regard to our data in whose making scores of complicated, and often intangible forces, enter.

The cultivation of that spirit of unbiased and truly scientific attitude, which is ever ready to check, to verify or discard without the sense of a personal loss, should be the aim and ideal of a social scientist, which the human geographer ultimately is.

## APPENDIX V

### HINTS FOR PRELIMINARY SURVEY WORK IN TRIBAL AREAS<sup>1</sup>

#### *Selection of Village for Enquiry*

THE HABIT OF a tribe may be roughly divided into a central and a marginal region. The margin itself may be divided into several sectors according as the tribe comes in contact with tribes speaking different languages and practising different economies.

In each of the marginal sectors, two villages should be selected at random, while, for the central region, three villages situated at suitable distances from one another will be enough.

In the marginal villages chosen for enquiry, the observer should select a village in which the tribe lives all alone, and another in which it lives side by side with other tribes and castes. It may be that in the latter, the tribe may be assigned a separate quarter for itself.

#### *Note-taking*

Notes are to be taken on *loose sheets* of paper, punched on the left margin so that they can be affixed to a file. A margin of *one inch* should be present on the left, and nothing must be written here on either side of the paper.

The size of the sheet may be half-foolscap, i.e.  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Demy quarter is a better size; but it may be difficult to secure such paper in the mufassil when the original supply runs short.

Three points should, without fail, be noted at the top of the sheet. An illustration is given below:

#### JUANG (1)

|                |                |                        |
|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Interview (6)  | Pal Lahara (2) | 5-6-1948 (4)           |
| Mani Juang (7) | Kantala (3)    | Economic Condition (5) |

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from the *Calcutta Geographical Review*, June 1950.



Here comes the report of the interview.

At the centre of the sheet, the name of the tribe should appear in capital letters (1). Below it should come the name of the state or the district (2) and the name of the village where the interview took place (3). At the top right hand corner, the date should be given when the present sheet was filled up (4). Below this should appear the subject matter dealt with in the note (5). At the top of the left hand corner, should be stated the method of gathering the information (6). Below this should come the name of the person or the book or the report from which the note has been prepared. If it is a printed book or an unpublished document, the full particulars, including, of course, the page number, must be given, so that the reference may be readily found out.

It is of the utmost importance that on each note-paper, there should never be more than one date, one place and one subject matter.

### *The Enquiry*

For our present purpose, we have to collect information on the following points only:

1. Village Census.
2. Economic Function.
3. Social Position.
4. Institutions for regulating Social Life.

#### A. METHOD OF ENQUIRY

The observer should select a village at random ; that is, he should not try to judge beforehand whether a village is 'typical' or not.

After having found a village for enquiry, he should first prepare a census. The number of people in each home should be counted, broadly placing the members in age-grades like 0 to 5, 6 to 15, 16 to 25, 26 and above, etc. There should be separate columns for men and women.

#### B. ECONOMIC FUNCTION

A typical head of a family should then be interviewed for enquiry. He should be asked: How does he make his

- living? What does he produce? What do the women and children produce or gather from the jungle? Does the man use all these for his family's consumption, or does he sell them in the market? What are the items (i) in his food or (ii) needs for his house-building or (iii) for his dress that he produces himself, or which he purchases from other people for money?

What does he do with his money? That is, what are the various things that he buys? From whom, or from which particular place has he himself last purchased his needs?

Does he pay any rent? To whom? Does he pay any part of rent by means of labour? What are the exactions to which he is subjected, and by whom are these exactions made?

- After having questioned one particular head of a family, the observer should proceed to another informant, and question him likewise. Three from each village would be considered enough for our present purpose.

It is of the utmost importance that the observer should not record generalized statements, but put down only actual facts. Let us try to explain this. Thus, instead of saying that the Juangs of Kantala buy their cloth from the weekly market at Pal Lahara four miles away, he should rather say something like this: 'Mani purchased a piece of *sari* for six rupees last year for his son's wife during the Durga Pooja fair in the village of Pal Lahara. The cloth is worn by the girl all the time, and is now almost worn out. It will perhaps last a couple of months more, after which, Mani proposes to buy a new piece from the fair at Bonai, where cloth is reported to be cheaper'. Specific facts are always more important than generalized statements.

#### C. SOCIAL POSITION

- How does the tribe stand in relation to its neighbours?
- Do they accept cooked rice and water from their neighbours? Are there high and low divisions among the tribe itself? • •

After having interviewed members of the tribe, get in touch with Hindu residents of the neighbourhood and ascertain how they regard the tribe in relation to themselves.

Ask them if there is any particular occupation characteristic of the tribe. Is there any custom relating to the

food habits or the sexual practices of the tribe which the Hindus consider outlandish or low? If the tribe is supposed to have monopoly in a particular occupation, then do members of other social groups abstain from practising it? If members of other castes or tribes take to that occupation, are they elevated or degraded in rank thereby?

#### D. INSTITUTIONS FOR REGULATING SOCIAL LIFE

Is there anything like a panchayat or a tribal chieftain? What are the functions of these institutions or of the heads of those institutions?

■

## APPENDIX VI

### OBSERVATION OF PERSONAL ATTITUDES IN CULTURE CONTACT SITUATIONS

WHEN DIFFERENT CULTURES come in contact with one another, the end results are not always the same even when general conditions appear to be more or less identical. It might of course be said as a general rule that when competition takes place between a culture which is able to yield more food, better shelter, and in general offer a higher standard of material life than another, for the same expenditure of energy per capita, the technologically advanced civilization has more chances of survival than the more backward one. The reason is simple; men wish to spend less energy than more for the satisfaction of the basic needs of life, if of course they can do so.

The forces of gravity act uniformly upon an apple falling down from a tree as upon a fast-moving aeroplane. Yet many factors which intervene modify the final results to a very large extent. In the same manner, the end results of culture conflicts may take the final shape which has been outlined in the first paragraph. But, if we take a view of things limited in space and time, we observe that the actual course taken by culture change may show a large amount of variability. All rivers flow into the sea. But the course which each actually takes is specifically determined in consonance with the accidents which it meets on the way.

It is our purpose to examine how mental states operate as one of the several factors which bring about variation under culture contact situations.

Let us start with a few simple examples. The Andamanese comes in contact with European civilization. There are hills and jungles into which the Jarawas, among the Andamanese, can retire in order to carry on their old, accustomed way of life. The new ways perhaps make too great a demand upon their capacity to change, and they try to avoid it if they can. But the jungles into which they retire refuse to yield adequate sustenance according to the old methods of production. Moreover, new animals enter the islands in the wake of the conquerors. Iron is also

introduced, and if the Jarawas cannot obtain it by trade, they steal iron from the encampments of the colonists. And thus, new sources of food and new elements of material culture gain admission into the culture of the Jarawas, and perhaps become responsible for fresh changes in their culture.

The Makah, who are one of the Nootka-speaking tribes of North America, have willy-nilly been made a part of modern American society. Their ways have changed considerably; yet a recent study by Elizabeth Colson shows that they do not feel quite at home in their new culture. They exist as a self-conscious unit, and are hardly able to make any real contribution of their own to the culture which has engulfed them.

The point is that in these two cases, the general direction of change has been towards technological change and progress. But as the mental states or attitudes of the tribal groups towards the immigrant cultures have not been quite equal, or the historical circumstances different, the results, as we see them now, are also different from one another. In culture contact studies, it should be our purpose not merely to indicate the general line of change, but also to indicate the exact nature of the changes, and to discover what factors have actually operated in causing a variability of results.

Let us now turn to more complex cases than those examined above. When European civilization came into conflict with the ancient civilizations of China and India, the short-term results were much more complex than in the case of the Andamanese or the Makah. One obvious reason was that the number of people involved was very much larger, and the second was that the attitudes prevailing among different sections of the population were also of a varied kind. There was a parallel flow of several streams of change, with a further complexity arising out of the mutual interaction of these streams.

Some sections of the people of India were naturally attracted by the promise of a higher standard of life for larger numbers of people which an acceptance of European civilization promised. Others again were repelled by the obvious selfishness of capitalistic civilization, its disregard of ties not founded upon economic association, its promo-



tion of a form of exaggerated individualism, and so forth. This led to an overvaluation of certain aspects of ancient Indian social life, and an undervaluation of some parts of European life. Such divergent attitudes, with their corresponding sympathies and antipathies, naturally resulted in various forms of selectiveness in respect of what came either from ancient India or from the modern West. The incorporation of culture elements was thus unequal within different groups of the population. In the subsequent competition for survival, there have grown half-way houses of culture in which accomodation has been found for varying combinations of Eastern and Western culture elements. .

One point which emerges out of the above consideration is that in anthropological studies of change, due regard should be paid to various group, and even individual reactions, so that we may gain a more adequate knowledge of the actual process of change in all its complexity of manifestation.

A second point of value is that conflicts which take place in the objective sphere are reflected within the personality of those who participate in the process. There are tensions not only between several groups, but also within the individual human mind. A culture does not take a new turn without reference to what is taking place within the soul of the participant. There may be a conflict of loyalties in the manner described above. We may even go a step farther and say that the direction which culture takes in future is partly set by the resolution of conflicts as it takes place in the individual soul. This may not be the best way of putting it, but what is meant is that the germs of change arise out of the resolution of conflicts as it takes place in particular human minds. When such a resolution finds general support, because of the promise which it holds in both the objective and the subjective spheres, such a man becomes a leader, and his voice is heard, as the culture enters upon a new phase of its history.

The suggestion is, therefore, made that in all case-studies of culture contact, or even when culture changes without contact, a study of personal loyalties, of inner conflicts and their attempted resolutions, should form an integral

part of the anthropologist's enquiry and observation. What may not yet reveal itself in the objective sphere, may very well find expression in the sphere of personality studies, even when the corresponding results are yet unborn in the objective world.



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NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE, born in 1901, has the rare distinction of being an academician, political worker and scholar. He received his Master's Degree in Science from the University of Calcutta in 1925 and joined its Department of Anthropology as a Lecturer in 1938, remaining on its Staff till 1942 when he was imprisoned by the British Government for his political activities. Released in 1945, he acted as Mahatma Gandhi's secretary during 1946-7. He rejoined the University of Calcutta in 1946, as a Lecturer and then became the Reader in its Department of Geography and retired on appointment as the Director, Anthropological Survey of India in 1959.

Recognized as an authority on the subject, his scholarship and researches embrace various fields of knowledge : Anthropology, Human Geography, Prehistoric Archaeology, Temple Architecture, etc. He went to America in 1957 and is considered an authoritative interpreter of Gandhism. His works include a number of books in English and Bengali, a few of which are : *Canons of Orissan Architecture*, *My Days with Gandhi*, *Studies in Gandhism*, *Hindu Samajer Garan*, *Konaroker Vivaran*, etc., and various monographs on cultural, anthropological and sociological topics. He is also the editor of *Man in India*, an anthropological journal.



## CASTE AND COMMUNICATION IN AN INDIAN VILLAGE

*D. N. Majumdar*

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